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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

EMPOWER AFRICAN WOMEN: TOWARD A GENERATIVE APPROACH TO PASTORAL COUNSELING

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF PASTORAL STUDIES

BY

FRANCA ONYIBOR

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY, 1994

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My deep gratitude to God for the gift of life. I offer heartfelt thanks to my community, the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, whose faithful love and companionship have been generously made available to me through the event in my life that led me to the Pastoral Counseling ministry.
Special thanks to my loving family and friends for their love and unceasing prayers. My sincerest thanks to the Faculty of the Pastoral Counseling program for their life-affirming presence, their encouragement and for offering me the graduate scholarship. I am particularly grateful to the director of my thesis, Dr. William Schmidt Ph.D and my reader Dr. Ann O'Hara Graff Ph.D for their sound guidance, inspiration and enthusiasm. My gratitude to Denise Giblin for being my soul friend through the times of pain and hope that were part of this project.

I thank Lorene Carper for her valuable support and my classmates for calling to me growth in both supportive and challenging ways. To the African ancestors and foremothers, and to many others, especially the women of Africa who have taught me to hope, I offer my grateful appreciation. God's blessings on us all.

To all the Oppressed women of Africa

who know the pain of oppression

yet dare to resist and to Hope

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I slowly folded Chinwe's sad letter, the third of its kind that I have received in a week from different African countries. I clearly remember that it all started that very moment. I felt compelled to respond in some way to the haunting questions that followed. Why such oppression? What was it like for our foremothers to be Black and African? How does their experience compare with my story and those of my fellow African women today? How can pastoral counseling respond adequately to the sociopolitical factors that contribute to the psychic wounding of African women, as we approach the twenty-first century?

The task ahead felt to me like an enormous challenge, yet deep within me, I felt that my African foremothers, mothers and sisters have commissioned me. And their presence has sustained me throughout the research, study, prayer and reflection, that were all part of this project.

The purpose of this thesis is both to explore the psychic injuries resulting from years of oppression and marginalization; and to suggest models for healing and empowerment of the African woman, in her own context. As this study will show, despite patriarchy, women enjoyed numerous privileges in African indigenous societies. But from

the time of the colonial invasion of Africa to date, the power and prestige of the women have continued to decline, to such an extent that she now numbers among the most marginalized.

There are now many levels of oppression suffered by the Black, African woman: by virtue of her race, she suffers from the dehumanizing aspects of colonialism; by virtue of her (often) low class, she is at the mercy of capitalist exploitation, locally and globally; by virtue of her sex, she is dominated by patriarchy, within the African indigenous culture, (and another face of patriarchy brought about by modernity and "christianization.").

As an African woman, who is also a pastoral counselor, I join the voices of some African women who are beginning to break the silence and dare to say 'no' to oppression. In doing this, I seek ways that Western-oriented pastoral counseling can cease to be merely accommodative, to become a genuinely transformative response to non-Western persons who seek to have their *own* voices count. In this sense, the African voice is lost as long as it is forced to fit the Euro-American framework of pastoral counseling. Sampson further explains:

> If, in order to be heard, I must speak in ways that you have proposed, then I can only be heard if I speak like you, not like me. Rather than being as an equal contributor, I remain enclosed in a discursive game that ensures your continuing advantage. The clear message is that current forms of psychological practice ... reflects the operation of the power of those in charge to dictate the terms by which psychological and social reality will be encountered (Sampson 1993, 1220).

Therefore, this project embarks on the journey of seeking ways to contextualize pastoral counseling within an African context, so that it speaks with an African voice.

I see pastoral counseling as a liberating and healing ministry based on a purposeful relationship between the caregiver and persons seeking help. This relationship is a dynamic process of caring and exploration, with mutually contracted goals, and occurs within the tradition, beliefs and resources of these persons and the community that supports (and surrounds) them. Thus, my working definition of a pastoral counselor is one who in relationship affirms life and recognizes its spiritual or religious dimension; recognizes the sociocentric dimension of the individual, and who by the use of verbal or non-verbal, direct or indirect, literal or symbolic modes of communication, empowers persons to live fuller lives as human beings and develop a society in which all persons can live a human life.

My approach in this thesis is <u>generative</u>.[1] This refers to an orientation that explicitly and directly attempts to simultaneously induce intrapsychic and societal change e.g., as in some aspects of current feminist psychology. In contrast, mainstream psychology which is mainly modulative, concerns itself with bringing about changes in the individual

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[1] A term borrowed from Moghaddam 1990. Proponents of this approach include Moghaddam 1990, Szasz 1961, 1970; Taylor 1985; Sinha 1986 and some "Third World" psychologists (Moghaddam 1990, 28).

so that he/she will be better adapted to society - an approach that tends to support the status quo (Moghaddan 1990, Worell and Remer 1992, Wilson 1993, etc.).

Instead, a generative approach attempts to create harmony between society and the individual experiencing mental problems, by explicitly concerning itself with the issue of societal change. For the pastoral counselor, this implies a prophetic presence, with the overall goal of transformation of persons and their contexts. Therefore, this thesis sets out to situate pastoral counseling within a psychosystemic context, convinced that the psyches of 'hurting' African women are inextricably linked to the African social and political pathology, precipitated by colonialism and neo-colonialism which still plague Africa. One cannot respond to one without the other.

My theoretical framework is informed by feminist and womanist psychology and theology, Africentric psychologists, psychosystemic approaches, African indigenous psychotherapy and African women's liberation theologies. Their common theme is that the transformation of social contexts is required for the transformation of persons. Therefore, the call to care for persons is simultaneously a call to care for the world (Graham 1992, 13). These perspectives insist that to the extent that Western therapeutic and pastoral interventions have not fully recognized the social character of the self, and the impact of the larger systemic structure

on the individual psyche, they can subtly become part of the oppressive system.

The generative approach that I have maintained in this thesis, honors the reciprocal interplay between the psyche of individuals and their cultural and sociopolitical realities. It also recognizes the individual's environment as teeming with possibilities, as well as having powerful limiting influence on the individual's choices.

The materials for this thesis stem from many sources: the interdisciplinary writings of Western and non-Western writers, discussions and correspondence with African women living within and outside Africa, as well as with persons who are knowledgeable and interested on the issue of the African woman. More importantly, from my experience as an African woman, who has had periods of exposure to Western contexts (especially Ireland and U.S.A); and who has also lived, visited and worked in other African countries, including Ghana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Nigeria (my country).

I have divided this thesis into four chapters. Chapter I attempts to outline the problem of the African woman by exploring her declining status and dignity since colonialism and missionary activity. It also takes a look at the psychopathology of colonialism, using Frantz Fanon's theory; discusses the issue of female circumcision and concludes with an acknowledgement of the ambivalence in which today's African woman is caught.

Insisting that oppression and psychic injury will not have the last word on the African woman, Chapter II explores the psychic resources for healing and empowerment. In doing this, it draws from the writings of Loth, Amadiume and Sertima on pre-colonial African women; feminist and womanist writings and the contributions of African women liberation theologians.

Since psyche and context are interconnected, Chapter III sets out to situate healing and empowerment of the African woman in a psychosystemic context, aware that individuals often internalize their social contexts, and that for the African, individual identity is closely linked to the group. My resources for this chapter include the psychosystemic approach of people like Graham, Hilman, Bell, Fernando; the works of Africentric psychologists, Mpolo and Nwachukwu's work on pastoral counseling in Africa, Valley's work on Africa's relations with the West, and insights from African indigenous psychotherapy.

Though the roots of her oppression and the resulting psychic wounding are deep, healing and empowerment remain possibilities for the African woman. Therefore, Chapter IV presents two models of healing and empowerment: the self-in-community model and the collective healing and empowerment model. These models attempt to integrate insights from liberation theologies, relational psychology, Paulo Friere and the complex realities of the African context, for the healing and empowerment of the African woman, and consequently, the

African man. As Tillion maintains: "any suffering affecting women, have repercussions beyond the feminine condition because, when daughters are abased, their fathers are besmirched; what hurts a mother strikes at her sons" (Tillion 1987).[2]

I admit that Africa is a huge and culturally multifarious continent, with a variety of ethnic groups and languages. Furthermore, African social structures result from at least three superimposed cultural stratifications, the indigenous (pre-colonial), the colonial and the post (or neo-) colonial Africa. While each of these realities may vary from country to country, with the position of women depending on the interplay of these three elements, it is however possible to draw from the various African countries fundamental elements that are common to all African women (Adeola 1990, Cutrufeli 1983; Robertson and Berger 1986; etc.). I have therefore been careful to not obscure the diversity, while highlighting the common elements with regard to oppression and the possibilities for liberation and transformation. One such common element includes village (or rural) and town (or urban) socio-cultural contexts that will be discussed in this thesis.

In most African countries, the rural setting is inhabited by people of the same or related ancestry. Many African villages have minimal influence of Westernization, resulting in the valuing of the traditions, culture and customs in

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[2]Quoted from Awa Thiam 1986.

villages. The town (which is predominantly urban), is inhabited by people from all over the country, who are of different ethnic groups and languages. Generally, they are not related in any way, except in their common quest for 'white collar' jobs in government offices, schools, hospitals and factories. In addition, more elaborate trading is a mark of town life. The urban setting has had (and continues to have) much of the influences of modernity, resulting in the watering down, neglect, or looking down on the traditions, customs and culture, by town dwellers.

Depending on the level of sophistication, some African towns are growing to be like any city in the Western world. Starting from the days of colonial domination, a growing number of Africans unfortunately consider town-life as 'superior' to life in the villages. Nevertheless, for holidays, important cultural feasts or funerals, many of them return to the village, where they feel that they truly belong.

Consciously and unconsciously, I come to this exciting project with my bias, my gifts and my own struggles as an African woman. It is my hope that as much as possible, I will allow my gifts to empower me, and my bias to <u>not</u> be in the way of my reporting as honestly as possible, the fruits of this sacred process. It is also my hope that you, the reader, will share in the many ways that I have been enriched, challenged and empowered in the process of this study.

CHAPTER II

DERIVING THE ROOTS OF OPPRESSION WITH ELEMENTS OF PSYCHIC INJURY

Where do you go, woman of Africa?
The road is long, the load too heavy
Take me with you. Let me share your burden
Just give me your hope, your strength, your courage.
Milazzo/Kenya

In this chapter, I intend to outline some of the roots of oppression of the African woman. These will include:

i. Aspects of women's oppression in indigenous African societies, with special emphasis on female circumcision.

ii. The oppressive contributions of colonialism and missionary activity. Aware that Africans have benefitted from the dedication of some missionaries (as has been documented by Africans and missionaries alike), my focus in this area is primarily on how missionary efforts have contributed (and continue to contribute) to African women's oppression.

iii. Frantz Fanon's contribution on the psychic wounding of oppression.

iv. The ambivalence that confronts today's African woman.

Women's Oppression in African Indigenous Societies

The role of the woman in African indigenous society is ambivalent. On one hand, she is exalted, and on the other

hand, denigrated. For instance, while women are looked upon as pure and virtuous, they are also regarded as unclean and contagious (Fanusie 1992, 137). The examples below attempt to illustrate the oppressive elements.

Menstruating women are considered unclean, segregated and forbidden to touch ceremonial objects, or to enter certain shrines (Edet 1992, 27). A widow is seen as someone to be sympathized with and helped, yet she suffers emotional and spiritual violence. On the death of her husband, her hair is loosened and made very untidy; she is dressed in old clothes; bathing is a taboo; verbal attacks keep her weeping all the time; the children are taken away by aunts who may not care for them and the widow is forbidden to do so herself; she may not leave the house until the period of mourning is over (usually months); the family belongings are taken away by uncles who are supposed to care for the wife and children, but who, in today's Africa, no longer do so.

Among the BaTongas of Zambia, towards the end of the mourning period, one of the dead husband's relatives is designated to "cleanse" the widow by having intercourse with her. Otherwise, she remains a taboo to other males. Presently, this custom has become one of the vehicles of HIV transmission (Dr. Keane 1993, 77). Sadly, most of these practices are monitored by women. Often, they are sisters-in-law whose cordial attitude change at the news of their brother's death. As we shall see in the practice of female

circumcision, women are also custodians of this oppressive custom.[1]

Female circumcision. This is another indigenous practice that is considered oppressive to the African woman. Here is a first-hand evidence from a young woman from Mali:

> After my personal experience of all the troubles, physical and psychological, that can result from excision and infibulation, I decided with the full agreement of my husband, not to have our three daughters done. They were born in France where my husband and I were finishing our studies. When I returned home to Mali, my mother immediately inquired if my daughters have been circumcised. I replied no, and made it clear that I had no intention of doing so. When I left my daughters with her (as I often did), I was greeted by a sorry sight on my return: they were lying on mats, with swollen faces, and eyes full of tears.... I gasped and cried out: 'what happened to you my children?' But before they could answer, the voice of my mother reached me: 'Don't go disturbing my grandchildren. They have been excised this morning.' (Adapted from Awa Thiam 1986, 63).

The phrase, 'female circumcision' is used to describe all kinds of mutilation, and this includes: circumcision (the mildest form), which is the cutting of the prepuce of the vagina; excision, which is the cutting of the clitoris and part of the labia minora; infibulation (the worst of all), is the cutting of the clitoris, labia minora and parts of the majora. Most frequently, these operations are performed by old women in the village, who rub mixtures of earth or ashes

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[1]As we shall see in Chapter IV, Paulo Friere traces this phenomenon (of the oppressed exploiting another) to the internalization of the oppressor by the oppressed. This realization is vital for healing and empowerment.

on the wound to stop bleeding. More recently in some countries, they are being done by qualified nurses and doctors (e.g., Bamako hospital in Mali). There is no conclusive data (as yet) on the relative frequency of the various forms of mutilation. Throughout this paper however, I will be using the term female circumcision.

There are no consistent or conclusive study done so far on the physical, sexual and psychological consequences of this custom. Physical consequences include tetanus infection, the threat of AIDS, possibility of chronic infections of the uterus and vagina; possibility of developing unbearable abdominal pains; further complications at childbirth; painful menstruation; or rendering the whole genital area permanently and unbearably sensitive to touch. Dr. A.A Shandall found that some of the circumcised women he interviewed in the Sudan, had no idea at all of the existence of orgasm (Minority Rights Group 1985, 4). On the other hand, Awa Thiam documents the experience of a young Mali woman who is pleased to feel no sexual desire at all because 'it permits a woman to be the mistress of her body.' (Thiam 1986, 42).

Psychologically, accounts make references to anxiety prior to the operation, terror at the moment of being seized and of being betrayed by one's parents, especially the mother. Furthermore, community pressure put on children to believe that their genitals are dirty, make them to voluntarily request circumcision, and to feel a sense of relief for having

it done.

In her book, Possessing the Secret of Joy, Alice Walker depicts the haunting story of Tashi, whose psyche (soul) was painfully wounded and broken, through the cultural practice of mandatory circumcision (Walker 1992). Tashi becomes the symbol of many women living in Africa, Moslem populations of Indonesia, Malaysia, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and other Eastern and Middle Eastern countries, who, to this day, endure the pain of this practice.

Despite enormous campaign to eradicate it, this age-old custom continues to persist, indicating that possibly, there are 'gains' in this custom that motivate mothers to subject their daughters to such operations.

On the mythological level, it is believed that if the female genitals are not excised, they will dangle between the legs like a man's (e.g., Ethiopia). In some countries (e.g., Egypt), the external female genitals is considered 'dirty' so that circumcision is done for cleanliness. Another belief is that the clitoris represents the masculine element in a young girl, and the foreskin representing the femininity in a boy. Both must be excised to demarcate clearly the sex of the person (Minority Rights Group 1985, 7).

Among the Somalis, so strong is female circumcision associated with pre-marital chastity that a non-excised girl will stand little chance of marriage, regardless of her virginity. The Tagouana of the Ivory Coast believe that a

non-excised woman cannot conceive; whereas among the Yoruba, excision is used as a form of contraceptive because it made it easier for women to lead a sexless life. Among Moslem populations (within and outside Africa), it is believed that a non-excised woman is impure in the religious sense (Kouba & Muasher 1985).

In places where female circumcision is seen as an initiation rite (e.g., among the Kikuyu in Kenya), it is followed by an elaborate ceremony, rich with the symbolism of stepping into 'new' life. With modernization, this ceremonious aspect is dying down, with the possibility of greater psychological damage (Kouba & Muasher 1985).

The subject of female circumcision is both complex and touchy. Though many African societies have sexual initiatory practices, it is considered immodest to speak of them in public (Beya 1992, 157). Thus, this practice needs to be treated with the greatest sensitivity. Critics say that Western efforts to eliminate it have tended to ignore this sensitivity (Hinga 1992, 188). Efforts to treat it solely as a health issue is being criticized by those who include the wholeness and sacredness of the woman's body. Using legislative means have been discouraged fearing that it could create a further problem of enforcement, say, in a country as vast as Nigeria (Minority Rights Group 1985, 18) and in May 1993, World Health Organization (WHO) officially made such legislation (Kogbara 1993).

African women committed to this issue note that international propaganda have not been helpful because it is often based on erroneous alarmist information, and colored by prejudice. For instance, in her work, titled "The Excised," Evelyn Accad speaks for the Saudi Arabian women who are also undergoing the pain of the practice of female circumcision (Badran & Cooke 1990, 169). Why is it then that international propaganda have tended to situate this problem primarily in Africa? Furthermore, in her book, Gyn/Ecology, Daly cautions that those in the West who are shocked by African female circumcision practice should consider its increasing parallels in the American cosmetic surgical practice, such as in mammaplasty,[2] mastopexy[3] and other forms of cosmetic surgery. Not only are these practices not condemned (unlike female circumcision), they are acclaimed and idolized (Daly 1978, 262-263). Daly further attests that up until the mid twentieth century, clitoridectomies were approved among Western gynecologists as the cure for female masturbation and orgasm. In fact, the renowned gynecologist, Dr. Sims, performed clitoridectomies well into the twentieth century (Daly 1978, 241-242).

Nevertheless, African women committed to the eradication of female circumcision in Africa suggest that concerned

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[2]Mammaplasty is the plastic reconstruction of the breast.

[3]Mastopexy which is a variation of mammaplasty involves the reshaping of the breast so that it points upward.

Western persons or organizations encourage and support local efforts. They also assert that in cultures where pre-marital chastity and marriage, two deep rooted values, are linked with circumcision, any physical suffering is preferred to the social ostracism experienced by an uncircumcised girl. There are numerous accounts of young girls who pester their reluctant mothers to have them circumcised (Hodge 1993, Women Rights Group 1985, etc.). Furthermore, this custom seems so significant that it is not enough to eliminate it, something of equal social and psychological importance needs to be found to take its place. Christine Hodge, a Canadian working for the United Nations in Mali, tells of a 'new method' of female circumcision in this country. This entails a simple prick to draw blood without cutting the clitoris. Hodge sees this as a possible interim solution and a sign of hope for the women. She confesses:

> As I watched the women dancing and singing and celebrating their daughters' entry into womanhood, I understood that not even the issue of female circumcision is a simple question of right or wrong. It has been easy for me with my Western mindset to condemn female circumcision. But what of the women here who are seeking a balance between old and new ways? How do you give up the old when the new is not yet here? (Hodge 1993).

Thus, an important step may be to enter into genuine dialogue with African women, including the custodians of this practice and where possible, to get the girls involved. As a potential African pastoral counselor, I would hope to join in promoting such dialogue.

As a christian participating in this dialogue, I am also aware of the dualism between sex and God, sexuality and spirituality, body and spirit, pleasure and goodness, which christianity has historically used to dull the edges of human and divine experience. I stand with these women in trying to restore our capacities to delight in ourselves and in our bodies, so that experiencing our sensuality and sexuality as gift and liberating resource, we will be strengthened to struggle for justice for all, women and men alike.

Colonialism/Missionary Activity and the Erosion of Women's Power

In his book, Falsification of the African Consciousness, Amos Wilson insists that much of African history has been written from the vantage point of the proponents of colonization and missionary activity. Apart from the new Western wave which is beginning to recognize some wisdom in African cultures, such history has generally tended to present a picture of Africans as culturally 'backward,' and perpetually needy, before and after the influence of these systems (Wilson 1993). To date, stories told by Western media and missionaries tend to re-enforce this view.

Such history says Wilson, has served to shame, dis-empower and destroy the self confidence of Africans as a people. In response, some Africans have resorted to 'cultural amnesia' choosing to forget or deny their history. For instance, Buchi Emecheta, a renowned Nigerian writer, claims

that Africans should no longer be concerned about what colonialism did to Africa, because many African societies have been 'independent' for over two decades (Emecheta 1990, 39). She forgets that neo-colonialism is still here with us, and that the way our history has been written in the past, still affects who we are today, and our perception of ourselves.

In this paper therefore, I intend to shed some light on the Eurocentic account of the African woman in particular, highlighting ways that colonial and missionary activity have contributed to the continued erosion of her power. I admit that the work of some Westerners have benefitted Africans, and continue to do so. Moreover, I do not mean to idolize pre-colonial Africa in an uncritical way, but to discover something of the dignity of the African woman, before the bias of Eurocentric historians "invented" her; for to transform her destiny, one needs to transform her history (Wilson 1993, 52). And so, the story goes....

Once upon a time, in a far distant land, there lived the Magondi people. This people lived in a desert land, surrounded by pockets of oasis, where the women and men fetched water for cooking, planted and harvested their crops, relaxed in the evening, did some fishing and so on.. In fact, the life of the village revolved around the water, and this bonded them together.

One day, the people of Magondi woke up to find their oasis swamped and covered by a huge river. To their

amazement, this 'magic' river spoke and assured them that it had come to make them even happier. Could they not see that the river was much bigger and more spread than the oasis? It promised them happier life, better crops, more enjoyment and better times for their children and great grand children. The people had no choice than to let the river stay, because already, it had so covered their precious oasis that they could no longer distinguish it from their 'original' oasis water. However, they were able to bear this loss because of the enticing promises of the magic river.

But then, the more they used the river, the more they lost sense of themselves as a people. In addition, they were plagued by the diseases that they never knew before; they fought and killed each other to make more money and to get richer. The more they tried, the more the promises of the river eluded them. With time, the people of Magondi became worn out and dejected. But then, it seemed too late because the river had permeated not only the oasis, but every land among the Magondi, and the more land it permeated, the more happiness evaded the people. To this day, they are still caught in the pursuit of the mirage of 'good' things promised them by the magic river, when it invaded their land (Franca Onyibor 1993).

Colonialism and missionary activity, have come to Africans disguised as the 'magic' river. With these two systems came the imposition of Western education; the violent

suppression of indigenous institutions of Africa; the break down of the family; the introduction of a cash economy and Western imposed system of government. Indeed, their effects are so confusedly and intricately intertwined with African world view that only some form of integration is possible.

Granted that women and men have both been adversely affected, their ravaging influence have resulted in the systematic decline of women's position, limited their political influence, increased their economic marginalization and emotional vulnerability (Mpolo & Nwachukwu 1991).

In a country like Zimbabwe, colonial records are filled with adjectives characterizing African women as indolent, lazy, slothful, immoral, savage, uncivilized, arrogant, independent and indifferent. A Jesuit missionary opposed the employment of women as teachers or catechists on the grounds that "their character make such serious occupation impossible" (Schmidt 1991, 736). These agents judged women primarily responsible for their perceived "depravity" of African society, including the men's refusal to enter forced wage labor, and to become "civilized" (Schmidt 1991, 737). Colonial courts often charged women with having left their husband "without just cause," despite the women's evidence of physical abuse.

In Zambia, the introduction of cash economy, plantations, mines and compulsory migrant labor, forced the shifting en masse of Zambian adult males, from work place to work place,

from one African country to another, from rural to urbanized settings. Through the colonial enacting of specific ordinances, females were discouraged from migration, not even to join their husbands. Consequently, family life began to breakdown; the wife was left in the village to cater for the children, and to do most of the agricultural work. (Robertson & Berger 1986). Furthermore, women had to rely much more on their migrant husband's generosity for survival. No rule guaranteed that these women share in their husband's wages which increased their subordination to their absent husbands.

In Kenya, the Kikuyu women were forced to work on the coffee plantations where they received minimal wage. These women were later forced into commercial economy in order to be able to pay the government enforced taxes and their children's school fees. This trend sowed the seed for a chronic dependence on a cash economy which has continued to marginalize today's African woman. All this was in sharp contrast to pre-colonial Africa where women held a central position in the indigenous economy (Loth 1987, Amadiume 1986).

Colonial and christian policies consistently and systematically discriminated against women, by weakening the indigenous institutions that had previously insured women's access to land and agriculture, involvement in the socio-political realms, organizing female customs and rituals (Amadiume 1986). Also, colonialism led to African women being offered as "hospitality prostitutes" to strangers from Europe,

for as little as small trinkets (Loth 1987). Writing about the Algerian situation, Frantz Fanon documented that the retreat of women into the confines of the home and their exclusion from the wider social context, (as imposed by colonial France), resulted in infantilization (Fanon 1967).

With national independence, many African women moved to the towns, which were already dominated by African males. Sadly however, the ruling class had so internalized the attitude of the colonial masters, that it seemed like a mere change of personnel. Sofola Zulu has this to say:

> With European exposure, the African male has been led to believe that the female is an after-thought, a wall-flower, and the man is heaven-sent, the controller of everything (Sofola 1990, 145).

The collective voice of African women writers point to similar bias in the novels of renowned African men. They assert that apart from a few African male writers (such as Wole Sonyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Sembene Ousmane), others have tended to create stereotypical presentations that denigrate African women (Muhando 1990, 86; Njau 1990, 107; Odaga 1990, 139; Sofola 1990, 145; etc.).[4]

In the case of the Copperbelt in Zambia, Jane Parapart noted that many of the women who migrated to the towns were forced to depend on the men economically and psychologically, which inhibited any formal organization among women (Parapart 1986, 150). Even women who recognized the need for solidarity

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[4]Qouted from Adeola 1990.

assumed that an all-female organization would fail, and so, collective action was ineffective. We shall see in Chapter II that in contrast, female solidarity was a mark of pre-colonial African women (Amadiume 1987). Under conditions of excessive competitiveness, economic, personal and social insecurity, women's inferiority was heightened, sometimes producing pathological effects of psychosis and mental illness (Rothblum & Cole 1990).

Under colonialism and christianity, many of the indigenous institutions of Africa were termed anti-christian, to the detriment of women. Among the Nnobi of Nigeria, christianity banned the ekwe title, which was an esteemed symbol of female status (Amadiume 1986, 123). With inculturation, there is talk of restoring the banned male (ozo) title, but no mention of the equivalent female title, the 'ekwe' title.

Supported by the insidious forces of colonialism, not only did christianity condemn the goddess religion in Nigeria and many African societies, it introduced a male deity, religious beliefs and practices that focused on a male God, and a male-dominated clergy. Young men who go into priestly formation are indoctrinated on how women are the arch enemy of a priest's 'holy' vocation. Should a priest seduce a young woman, his sin is nicely covered up by his bishop, while the young woman is condemned and executed psychologically and spiritually (Ekeya 1986, 65).

With christianity's influence, today's African men have discarded aspects of the indigenous culture which guaranteed women full participation in social, religious and political spheres. With christianity, polygamous men who sought baptism were told to choose one of the wives and to send the rest away. The once happily married women found themselves abandoned and homeless, resulting in untold pain to them and their children (Nasimiyu-Wasike 1992, 114).

Ironically, christianity, which teaches that "in christ, there is no male nor female" (Galatians 3:28), turns around and operates out of male domination. In this sense, christianity has come as mixed blessing for the African woman, and has meant further domination to women who were already experiencing unfair male treatment in some aspects of the indigenous customs.

Self-affirmation, another significant aspect of precolonial African women, has become very difficult for today's African women, many of whom have interiorized the concept of 'self-denial.' Current organizations of women (many of which are church-linked) tend to emphasize self sacrifice, self-denial and doing 'charitable' work, as their guiding principles. In Zaire for example, in addition to selflessly caring for their families, women organize fund-rasing activities for the church, predominantly motivated by selfless service. Even African women theologians like Mercy Oduyoye and Theresa Okure, hold up the model of 'selfless

service, in ways that may possibly, add to the already 'burdened' African women (Oduyoye 1986, 71; Okure 1986, 112).

With teachings imbued with "misogynism," the christian churches are regarded as one of the most oppressive structures with regard to African women; and they have yet to acknowledge their share of the blame in upholding structures that continue to dehumanize women (Ramodibe 1989, 16). Women form the majority of christians yet they have no direct access to the Word of God, which can only be given them by men (priests or ministers) who naturally see Jesus through the male eyes. Scripture passages are interpreted to the detriment of women. In some cases, men use them as the excuse of being tyrannical to their wives, to the extent of physically assaulting them (Ekeya 1986, 63). Whereas African indigenous society had provisions for preventing excessive cruelty to wives, church laws have no such provisions.

In the catholic church, the total absence of women in decision-making bodies is notable, especially with regard to issues that pertain to their lives e.g., polygamy, widowhood, title-taking, sisterhood, etc. Bishops and priests dictate to religious women how to live their lives. Though women constitute the great majority of active church members in Africa, the document in preparation of the African Synod (*Lineamenta*) totally ignored the position, responsibilities and problems of the women (Banda 1991, 13). The sad aspect is that a good number of African women are so caught up in the

struggle for mere day to day survival that they seem unaware of their oppression by a church they have come to trust; a church that blatantly acts as though being a woman means silence, being brushed aside, suffering and weakness. Women who dare speak have to have "manlike" qualities to be taken seriously. Furthermore, some christian myths portray the woman as noble and saintly if she is passive; if assertive, she is evil, a witch and temptress.

In Cameroon and in many African countries, there is an increase in the number of women who are unmarried and do not wish to enter the convent. Many of them are professionals in their own field and would want to share their gifts in church ministry, but the church can only tolerate them if they do what they are commanded to do (by male clergy), and no more. Conspicuous consumption and a vulgar display of wealth, that ignores the needs of the poor, especially women, is a problem that African churches remain guilty of.

Even Western education has perpetuated female discrimination. While boys were prepared for government, trade, industry, church and educational services, girls were prepared for domestic services and taught cooking, cleaning, child care and sewing, so that they would be better equipped to be efficient 'housewives,' ready for the ghettos of 'woman work.' Tisani sums up the adverse effects of colonialism and missionary activity for the African woman:

> No one wishes to paint the precolonial life of African women as idyllic, but to proclaim the

> colonial Christian era as liberating, especially to African women, is the height of ethnocentricity. The combination of capitalist exploitation and European ideas about appropriate economic and domestic roles for women all but destroyed the economic independence and traditional form of social authority exercised by African women in the precolonial era (Tisani 1990, 81).

Fanon and the Psychopathology of Colonialism

Frantz Fanon was a Black Algerian psychiatrist and soldier. Born in 1925, he studied medicine in Paris, specializing in psychiatry. He died at the age of thirty-six. During a period of less than eight years, he wrote three books in which he approached the African (Negro) psychopathology from the vantage point of colonial oppression.

Though not widely used among Western psychiatrists, I have deliberately chosen his work because he was one of the African pioneers to recognize that it would be substantially difficult to apply Eurocentric theories to the study of the African, because of the differences in the cultural milieus where these theories originated. He also insisted that psychiatry should overtly recognize and take seriously, the permeation of politics in its practice.

Fanon maintains that the colonial language has been used consistently to colonize the Negro mind, a point that is upheld by modern African writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Decolonizing the Mind (1986), or the collective voices of African women writers, In their own words (1990). Speaking of the power of language, Wilson and the philosopher Foucault

subscribe to Fanon's theory insisting that there is a direct connection between naming and dominion, the language that people learn to speak and power relations, because language is connected to power (Foucault 1972, Wilson 1993). Though ethnic complexities may also be a factor, it remains interesting to note that to this day, many African countries use either English or French (the language of the colonizer), as their lingua franca. Mazrui adds to this observation, pointing out that the very identity of African countries is partly tied up with whether they speak English, French, Portuguese or some other imperial language. "We never speak of "English-speaking" or "French-speaking" Asia, but we do for African countries" (Mazrui 1980, 60).

From his experience in France, Fanon observed that while the Germans or Russians were respected for having their own language and culture, and therefore could be excused for speaking French badly, a Negro's inability to speak the colonial language 'perfectly' was often interpreted as an evidence of his/her inferiority (Fanon 1967, 34). For those Negroes who could speak the colonizers' language, the colonizer responds with amazement "You speak good French!" In my experiences in Ireland and the United States, I have heard similar expressions of amazement "you speak such good English, how come?" - an experience also shared by many of my African friends.

Furthermore, Fanon notes that the European has invented

"cosmic Negro myth" that helps them to maintain their discriminatory treatment of the Negro with no guilt feelings. Part of this myth is that the Negro is beast-like, a force to be pacified, not reasoned with (Fanon 1960, 201).

Another myth contained in the collective unconscious sees Black as evil. In Jung's collective unconscious, the Black archetype is dirty, shadowy, shady, nightly, bad luck, ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality, labyrinths and abysmal (Fanon 1967, 192). Folklore, fairy tales and religious myths have tended to reinforce this prejudice against Blackness. In the catholic tradition to which I belong, angels are depicted as White, and the devil Black; sin is to Negro as virtue is to White. Unfortunately, laments Fanon, Black persons have come to interpret Blackness in a similar fashion, leading to the Black self-hatred.

A Black client once narrated proudly to me, how she won a verbal fight in school by calling her opponent a Black devil, because she said, 'he really had a dark skin!' A common saying among Ugandan children is "You're proud, do you think you're White?" Recently too, one of my White friends expressed her feeling of disgust each time she came to the part of her dream where there were Black fishes.

The result is 'Negrophobia' in Blacks and in Whites alike. One of my Black friends living in the United States put it this way, 'the Black person (especially the male) is immediately presumed a dangerous criminal until he proves

otherwise.' The strategies resorted to by the Black person to elude the 'stigma' of Blackness include, skin-whitening, the bizarre attempts of some Africans to emulate the speech, manners, dressing, hairdo and attitudes of the Western world. Ironically, these efforts deepen self-hatred, sense of alienation and inferiority (Fanon 1967, 111).

Recent African authors are also beginning to recognize and name this 'dis-ease.' Awa Thiam maintains that a myth that has prevailed is that a light-skinned Black woman is more beautiful than a dark-skinned one! Thus, bleaching agents are flooding the shops in America, Africa and Europe, even though these chemicals have been known to expose one to the possibilities of skin cancer! Hair-straightening has also been injurious, often causing loss of hair, burning of scalps and ears for many Black women and men (Thiam 1986).

Speaking of colonial domination of which racism is but one element, Fanon states two-sided character of the indigenous people's response to colonial domination. The first he calls 'cultural withdrawal,' by which the indigenous peoples passively or actively attempt to retain a semblance of their originality. He uses the example of the Arab woman who, by her veil, performed an act of resistance, denying the colonizer access to her face and symbolically, to her person.

The second he calls 'colonial deficiency.' With the denigration of a people's entire way of life, language, food dress, the accepted social mores, and feeling powerless to

challenge the colonial state, many of the colonized often and tragically come to view their own former cultural life-style through the denigrating perspective of the colonizer. In so doing, they eventually arrive at self-hatred, inferiority despair and swallowed anger; resulting in the psychopathology of 'colonial personality.' From childhood, the Black person is similarly traumatized by the clash between the indigenous values that have survived colonial domination, and the negation of these values once in contact with the Western culture through the schooling system. Fanon was not alone in this hypothesis. Analyzing the African American situation, W.E.B. Du Bois, used the term 'double consciousness' to describe the psychic situation of African Americans.

> It is a peculiar sensation, ... this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity (Du Bois 1973, 29-32)

Critics of Fanon (mainly Western psychiatrists) point out that the major problem of his theory concerns the nature of the relationship between politics and psychology. Though he may not have been entirely successful in doing this, many hold that his description of the psychopathology of the colonial domination is both unique and compelling. As we shall see in Chapter III, like Fanon, Africentric psychologists insist on the connection between politics and psychotherapy.

Women's Ambivalence

In addition to Fanon's theory, rapid social change and turbulence adds to the complexity of the African problem. In his book, The Africans, a Triple Heritage, Ali Mazrui reports that "the present 'identity crisis' within African states indicates that the African ancestors are angry" (Mazrui 1986, 11). The 'sin' is that in their confusion, Africans are engaging in 'dis-Africanization,' cultural amnesia and Westernization; turning their back on the wisdom of indigenous culture. This trend indicates how successful colonialism and missionary activity were in alienating Africans from their "Africanness" (Oduyoye 1986, 62). Within this social turbulence, women are further exploited, resulting in a certain dilemma, feelings of ambivalence in the face of conflicting values, disillusionment and inferiority. The issue of polygamy presents an example of this dilemma and ambivalence. Mata tells her story:

> I am Mata from Tanzania. At 18, I was married to a man from Uganda who was at the time living temporarily in Tanzania, so we later returned to Uganda and lived in an urban setting. We had two children and still kept the same little room...so that we were really cramped. After five years of marriage, I was pregnant for the third time. It was during this pregnancy that my husband returned home one night, accompanied by a young woman. 'This is my new wife,' he told me. 'Her name is X... You'll have to let us have the bed. For tonight, you can sleep on the mat, there in the corner with the two children.' I was flabbergasted. I wondered if I was dreaming. But no, I was not dreaming. What a cheek! I had to give up my bed for this newcomer, my rival. (Adapted from Awa Thiam 1986, 16).

Polygamy in Africa means that a man has more than one wife at the same time, and this does not necessarily imply divorce and re-marriage. In pre-colonial Africa, polygamy was acceptable, and in general, was not oppressive of women. Some of polygamy's advantages for the woman included possibilities of autonomy within marriage, especially for the elderly women, and the embedded supportive systems of child care and domestic help, through co-operation between the wives. This facilitated mobility and therefore encouraged women's economic and political activities. Even a very young wife who might have been dominated in a polygamous marriage had positive models in the indigenous powerful women, to whose ranks she could aspire (Loth 1987).

With current trends towards inculturation, African men and their Western sympathizers are arguing for the reconsideration of polygamy in the church (Bujo 1992; Hilman 1975; Shorter 1988), but they seem unaware that polygamy as practiced in today's Africa, is often very oppressive of women, as in Mata's story. Polygamy for today's African woman, means jealousies and rivalries; squabbles and fights among co-wives that keep them disunited, powerless, weak and suspicious of each other (women against women). Often, this is passed on to their children.

The rhetoric of national independence remains but a mirage to the majority of African women. In Eastern, Western and Central Africa, boys and girls get equal opportunities to

attend primary school, but later on far more girls drop out than boys. This is the result of a number of forces such as becoming pregnant and getting expelled while the offending boy is let free; discouraging counsel from teachers, or relatives.

The promise of the 'magic' river continues to elude the African woman. For the women who persevere in their schooling, Western education held the promise of a good job and a better life. But alas!, in today's Africa, the work place is saturated with stressful conditions for women. In urban areas, women dominate in low-level jobs, where they suffer prejudice and discrimination, and lack of prospects for on-the-job training. For many (e.g., Swazi women), urban living means loss of the traditionally accepted independent position of the African woman. This is replaced by life in the slums, prostitution, poverty and hunger (Banda 1991, 16).

Studies done in Kenya report that female headed families are the most economically depressed among the urban population - findings which can be replicated in most African countries (Rothblum & Cole 1990). Research done in Southern Zaire showed that the general cause of prostitution is the abject poverty in which most of the families of the prostitutes are forced to live (Beya 1992, 168). A study done in urban Ghana showed that women formed the majority of patients suffering from depression and psychoneurosis (Rothblum & Cole 1990, 7).

Since military rule has become the order of the day in most African countries, incidence of brutal sexual aggression

by the military is rampant. There are also increasing incidence of sexual harassment in schools and work places both by male colleagues and male bosses.

An example can be seen in what happened in Kenya in 1992. The male students of St. Kizito's co-educational boarding school ravaged a girls' dormitory, after cutting phone and electric lines. This resulted in the deaths of 19 of the girls and the rape of 71 others. The deputy principal of the school (a woman), was quoted as saying, "The boys never meant any harm to the girls. *They just wanted to rape them*" (James 1992, 35). What an excuse!!

In rural areas, women's socio-economic position has deteriorated and stagnated, in comparison to pre-colonial days. Despite the evidence that Africa is fed by women, both national and international investments of money are not given to them (Banda 1991, 15). Consequently, perennial cash crops have become institutionalized male crops; the new technologies in farming have ignored women, and increased their labor such that they have become unpaid family laborers on men's farms.

What is very unfortunate is that African women have so internalized their oppression that a sort of self-colonization (and self-oppression) now exists alongside patriarchy and neo-colonialism. The African woman now speaks and acts towards herself and her fellow African women in the manner in which her oppressors have treated (and continue to treat) her. As Renita Weems maintains, the way a woman treats another,

reflects how she feels about herself (Weems 1988, iv).

A close look at African countries like Zaire, Senegal, Botswana, Kenya, Angola and Ghana shows that the few "token" women who have managed to escape the fate of the great majority of African women, prefer to establish their middle class position, than be involved in establishing female solidarity (Robertson & Berger 1986). Many of these middle class women (with families) usually employ domestic servants (often women) to carry out all the "dirty work" of the household and to tend young children. Such servants, are among the worst paid of workers in Africa (Bujra 1986, 135). Ironically, these women join the rank of many African men to perpetuate the pattern of oppression of their fellow women, while openly denouncing women's oppression in other contexts.

Furthermore, the oppression of the African woman starts in the home, where mothers treat girls differently and boys as heirs. In addition, many of the oppressed women are so focused on mere survival that they do not have the time or energy to protest their oppression. Some do not even know and cannot imagine an alternative existence; another majority feel totally powerless, and to keep sane, have come to accept as normal, situations and structures that are very oppressive to their personhood. Indeed, the promise of the magic river continues to elude her - the oppressed woman of Africa!

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to explore the psychic injuries resulting from years of oppression and marginalization of the African woman. Notwithstanding the continued wounding of her psyche, I believe that there remains a part of her soul that continues to resist, to make her voice heard, and to seek life in its fullness. Yes! Life that will enrich the whole of Africa, the whole human family and the whole of creation! It is therefore with the hope of healing and empowerment that I turn to the rest of this thesis.

CHAPTER III

RESOURCES FOR PSYCHIC HEALING AND EMPOWERMENT

Chapter I elucidated the roots of oppression and psychic wounding of the African woman. This chapter insists that oppression and its resulting psychic injury will not have the last word on the African woman. It points to signs of hope, which includes the convincing evidence of outstanding elements of psychic health in precolonial African women, despite pervasive patriarchal domination. I shall tell the stories of these ancestresses, convinced that today's African woman possesses something of their 'psychic health' in her very gene. I will also tap into the interdisciplinary contributions of contemporary African women (and men); and insights from Western feminist and womanist writings. My goal is to tap into the cultural-historical, psychological and religious resources in and for the African woman.

Cultural-Historical Basis for Psychic Health Within the African Woman

Sofola Zulu, a contemporary Nigerian writer maintains that,

> the only way the African woman of today, with her European orientation which we call education, can be liberated is to study the traditional system and the place of woman as defined by it; for there was no human endeavor in the traditional system where

> the woman did not have a role to play (Zulu 1990, 150).

Her suggestion is particularly pertinent for our purposes because many attempts at women's empowerment are often labeled (by critics) as feminism imported from Western countries. Yet, long before they knew of the existence of Europe, Africans had a way of life where men were secure enough to let women advance as far as their talent, royal lineage and prerogatives would take them (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1992, Sertima 1984). Thus, contemporary writers like Amadiume (1987), Loth (1987), Sertima (1984) and Lebeuf (1963) insist that a great deal of the writings about African women's lack of power is incorrect.

What follows therefore, is not merely a glorification of the Black African woman but an attempt to add to the too few positive records concerning her. In discovering her foremothers' accomplishments in history, today's African woman will be further empowered in her efforts for a better world.

A Legendary Narrative. The African culture is one of oral tradition. A recovery of this tradition highlights the pivotal place of women in indigenous Africa. The following legend is one such example.

A popular legend among the Fante of Ghana is about *'Eku'* the matriarch. When the Fante were journeying to their present home in Southern Ghana, they crossed vast waterless plains and were dying of thirst. Their agony was so much that

they were near despair, but following Eku's encouragement, they dragged their weakened legs along until they came to a pool of water. Though parched with thirst, the people would not drink, fearing that the water was poisoned by their enemies. Matriarch Eku took her life into her hands, drank from the pool, and gave her dog to drink. Seeing that neither she nor her dog suffered from drinking the water, all drank to their fill shouting "Eku aso" (Eku has tasted). Eku tasted on their behalf, so they could drink without fear of death. To this day, the place is called "Ekuaso," in her memory. (Adapted from Fabella & Oduyoye 1989, 35).

Accounts of Dignity, Solidarity and Personal Power. Amadiume's detailed study of pre-colonial Nnobi society (in Nigeria) reveals that the flexible gender roles gave women more power and dignity than in today's Africa. The female monarch *'Omu'* and her councilors were responsible for the female section of the community. Though the elite of the society, there was a strong bond of solidarity between them and other women, whose interests they represented in the administration and government.

Furthermore, women organized themselves as daughters, wives, and mothers. Daughters had strong powers in the place where they were born. They ensured that their father's household was at peace, and played an important role at funerals. Wives and mothers had access to the essential

economic resources, land and market. Those who were economically successful, or showed signs of charismatic leadership, could take title (*Ekwe title*) and become political and ritual leaders. They dealt with marital quarrels, and disciplined whoever was at fault. A woman could refuse to give her husband food if he did not contribute to the foodstuff. Sex was not forced on a woman. In any case of violence, relatives were at hand to defend their sister, daughter or mother. In solidarity, women were able to protest any infringement on their rights.

In her book, Women in Ancient Africa, Heinrich Loth gave an account of an English traveller Brodie Cruickshank, who recorded that in the African woman, there was a pleasing liveliness, gaiety, and softness; in her graceful movement, one saw youth, health, lightness and agility. Other early writings recorded (with surprise) that in some African groups, the birth of a girl was a cause of great joy. David Livingstone reported the case of a South African group where women sat among the elders in decision-making and their authority was respected. A 14th century Islamic scholar (Ibn Batuta), found it unusual that women were treated with more respect than men in Timbuktu, which at the time was an important trading center in Mali (Loth 1987, 21).

Loth records that in the first half of the 15th century, Queen Amina effectively ruled the kingdom of Songhai in West Africa. The Ashanti of Ghana sing of their ruler Guebi Ababoi

Wankii, who was renowned for her generosity, especially towards those who were in need. In the Sudanese state of Adai, founded in 1650, the Queen Mother (mother of the king) had considerable influence in politics. The same applies to the Swazi of Southern Africa, the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Bamilieke of Cameroon, the Lovedu of Transvaal, North eastern Zimbabwe, etc. In the Zulu empire of southern Africa, which developed in the 1820s, the king reigned with his mother, wife or sister. Among the Herero (Namibia), the daughter of the chief had a special position.

One of the most powerful states in the Congo basin was Ndongo, called Angola by the Portuguese because it was ruled by a powerful African princess called Nzinga Ngola (1582-1663). In contrast to the royal courts of Europe, the highest positions at Nzinga's court were taken by women. In 10th century Ethiopia (the oldest state of Africa), when the empire was beginning to crumble, Queen Judith and her troops fought and defeated the kings of Aksum, and took complete control (Oduyoye & Kanyoro 1992, Loth 1987, Sertima 1984).

Despite the fact that the contributions of many of these women have unfortunately lapsed into the oblivion of history, remnant accounts reveal that even in colonial Africa, women were involved in the wars and revolts against colonial conquest; exemplifying their dignity, strength and solidarity (Blumberg and West 1990, Cutrufelli 1983). These protests include, the Harry massacre in Kenya (1922); the Anlu Uprising

in the former British Cameroons (1958/59); in Nigeria, the 'Aba riots' of 1929 which drew a lot of international attention. Women served as generals and lieutenants in the Mau Mau war (Ngugi wa Thiong'o & Micere 1977).[1] African women thwarted colonial efforts to eliminate African culture, so that the survival of certain customs was the result of their "continual resistance" (Collins 1990).

In the area of clothing, Loth maintains that despite various prejudices about alleged "nakedness" found in early anthropological reports, African women had a sense of propriety and lived modest and pure lives. In fact, with a tradition that has lasted over a thousand years, women's different forms of clothing, ornaments and jewelry demonstrate their rich imagination and inventiveness. Madagascan women could spend up to an entire day doing their hair. To this day, traits of elaborate hair plaits are still evident in many African societies. More importantly, the need to decorate themselves, was in itself, an expression of high self-esteem and joyous vitality (Loth 1987).

In the area of art, African women had important influence in pottery, songs, dance and poetry. Women also decorated their mud huts with various beautiful and intricate designs, which they renewed from time to time.

Benezet Bujo reports that some of these arts which satisfied the colonial standards were shipped off to the

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[1]Quoted from Adeola 1990.

colonial motherland, where they ceased to belong to Africa. Today's Africans who want to study their art and history have great difficulty in getting access to these ancient masterpieces of their people. He cites the case of a mask of cultural and religious significance from Benin which is in the British museum. Clearly, it should be returned to Benin but the English claim that they need parliamentary consensus to return what they stole from the African soil (Bujo 1992).

In healing, women were involved in diagnosing illness, helping with births, and other female complaints. The Massai of East Africa gave massage to pregnant women during the last months of pregnancy, in order to put the child in the best position for birth. An English traveller Felkin, recorded that he witnessed a successful Caesarean operation in Uganda, in 1879. This was done on a twenty-year-old woman who was having her first baby. She did not cry during the operation, and was able to suckle her baby two hours after the operation. By the eleventh day, the wound was healed (Loth 1987, 116).

In the spiritual realms, women played significant roles. Priests and Priestesses underwent professional training. The role of these priestesses can be equated to that of ministers, pastors and priests in the christian churches, except that theirs had more community involvement and participation. They conducted services and performed rites as occasions demanded. Their salvific ministry included acts of healing, exorcism, promoting fertility and encouraging success in life's venture.

Women participated in community worship as cantors, choristers, gift bearers and sometimes dancers. Shrines were also built to the goddesses and ancestresses.

Though with the dawn of christianity African women lost their pivotal place in religious ceremonies, African independent churches are beginning to revive this vital role. One such pioneer was Vita Kimba of the Congo, believed to be the first (female) christian to create an African independent church. A catholic priest had Vita brought before the royal Congolese court (which of course, was colonial at the time). He accused her of treason and heresy. She was condemned to death and burned at the stake on the first of July 1706, with the name of Jesus on her lips (Loth 1987, 135). Nevertheless, she planted the seed for independent churches that have spread like wild fire throughout present day Africa.

Having explored this legacy of health within the psyche of the African woman, we turn to the contributions of Western feminists.

Resources from White Feminist Psychology

The African sees the individual as embedded in a network of relationships. In fact, to be, is to be in relationship, with oneself, other humans, the spirits, nature and the Supreme Being (God). For the African woman in particular, her self-definition and her core self experience are in the context of these relationships. Therefore, a model that will

facilitate her healing and empowerment will have to take relational networks seriously. This is one of the major contributions of white feminist psychologists.

For the purpose of our discussion, we shall focus on the contribution of the core group of scholars at the Stone Center: Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver and Surrey. The key themes that I shall highlight in these women's work-in-progress include: their validation of women's experience, out of which they developed a relational model of women's psychological development. Our discussion will focus on self-in-relation, empathy, self-empathy, and relational empowerment, as crucial features of this model.

Validation of Women's Experience. The Stone Center women insist on an approach to women's psychological development that validates the experience of women. Surrey explains:

> While most developmental theories emphasize the importance of disconnection from early relationships to achieve a separate and bounded self, women's experience contradicts such theory and suggests that a new model of development is needed to account for the centrality and continuity of relationships throughout women's lives (Surrey 1985, 1).

Earlier works of other women have supported this standpoint. For instance, the central theme of Toward a New Psychology of Women is that women's sense of self is very much organized around making and maintaining relationships (Miller 1976). She asserts the need to develop new language and new concepts that describe and validate this relational core of

women. In her work, In a Different Voice, Carol Gilligan further asserts the need for women to find their own voice (located in relation not in separation), in order to describe and validate for themselves, their own experiences of relatedness and connectedness to others (Gilligan 1982).

With these women, the Stone Center group insist that the "relational self" is at the core of self-structure in women. Thus, their development of the "self-in relation" model outlined below.

The Self-in-Relation Model. Self-in-relation is a model of psychological development that stresses on-going mutual, empathic connection as central to psychological well being. It defines the basic core self-structure in women as relational and locates the origin of this core in the mother-daughter relationship. Nancy Chodorow's work on The Reproduction of Mothering highlights the core elements of this early relationship (Chodorow 1978).

Drawing from Object relations theory, Chodorow speculates that body sameness and societal values, support and encourage early mother-daughter attachment. This allows for girls identification with maternal figure, and the development of flexible self-other boundary in girls. In contrast, boys are supported to curtail primary identification with mother, forcing them to create less flexible self-other differentiation (Chodorow 1978).

Tapping into this hypothesis, the psychologists who propose the self-in-relation model assert that in this early mother-daughter identification process the girl picks what is going on in mother-daughter emotional field, and has the ability to impact on this emotional field. For the infant, this is the beginning of the development of an internal sense of self in relationship, mutually participating in that relationship. The point is that this is a two-way interactional process between mother and daughter.

The early mother-daughter connection (based on their feeling states and identification) develop over time into a mutual reciprocal process in which both are highly responsive to each other's feelings. Through this mutual sensitivity, mother is implicitly teaching the girl (child) caretaking practices of attentiveness and emotional responsivity to others. This becomes an intrinsic, on-going aspect of the girl's life-cycle so that adult women experience a heightened, enhanced sense of their personal identity and personal powers in the context of relationships.

This early emotional sensitivity develops into a complex cognitive and affective interactions that is later identified as empathy, while the early connectedness and capacity for identification becomes the basis for women feeling that to "understand" and "to be understood" are crucial factors for self-acceptance.

A woman's sense of self becomes grounded in her ability

to make and maintain relationships. She so internalizes these relationships that they become integrated into the basic core of her personality structure. Miller maintains that due to this internal representation of herself (in relation), the woman experiences an inner sense of relatedness, and often feels a sense of effectiveness when experiencing empowering emotional connections (Miller 1990, 11-26). Thus, this pathway of development includes both outer "real" relationships (with lovers, friends, families, work-place, etc.), and inner sense of relationship.

However, the difficulty is that this early relationship with mother may not move to a more complex, articulated pattern of relationship, making it problematic for the adult woman to act in ways that deviate from an internalized sense of self as "caretaker":

> Through the process of mutual identification, the daughter learns to be "the mother," that is, a caretaker and nurturer of others. This probably accounts for the persistence of this primary sense of identity as the "caretaker of others" and a profound sense of "badness" associated with acting as the "bad" mother. Thus, self-enhancing, self-determining behavior may elicit this negative "bad mother" introject for the woman, causing her, even in adulthood, to feel "selfish" when she acts on her own needs (Surrey 1990, 41).

Related to this, is the fact that while connection and responsive relationships remain central to women, a study by Belenkey, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule suggest that women silence themselves or are silenced in relationship rather than risk open conflict that might rupture the relationship

(Belenky et. al. 1986). This may also explain the difficulty some women have in separating from self-destructive or ungratifying relationships with men or women (Surrey 1990, 42).

Aware of the above difficulties therefore, the inherent vision of this relational model is that women's development will move from a relationship of caretaking to one of mutual consideration, caring and empowering; from losing one's voice to reclaiming it. Thus, this model is not about sliding into a soft, undifferentiated slime of emotional dependencies but about a new way of being in connection that empowers. This means moving from the early mother-daughter relationship toward a more comprehensive and mutually empathic relationships. Participation in such relationship generates a greater sense of energy, zest, self knowledge and knowledge of the other, capacity to act, sense of self-worth and the desire for further connection.

The crucial features of this relational model include empathy, self empathy (also called intrapsychic empathy) and relational empowerment. We shall briefly discuss them below.

Empathy. This construct is rooted in human relatedness. According to the relational model, empathy has its beginnings in the early mother-daughter relationship. Jordan, Surrey and Kaplan explain that,

> empathy involves both affective and cognitive functioning and is a far more complex,

> developmentally advanced and interactive process ... [It] always involves affective surrender and cognitive structuring, and in order for this to occur, ego boundaries must be flexible... [And] for empathy to be effective, there must be a balance of the affective and cognitive, the subjective and objective (Jordan, Surrey and Kaplan 1990, 28).

The concept of empathy will be further discussed in chapter IV.

Self-empathy. This inner sense of relationship includes as it were, becoming one's own mother; internalizing the attentive, listening, caring capacities to include oneself; again in the context of relationships. This happens when the observing self makes empathic contact with the experiencing self with an attitude of nonjudgement and compassion for oneself. Surrey (1990) observes that in general, females tend to be more empathic than males, with the important exception of self-empathy. Therefore, the vision of the self-in-relation model is that women will develop from the observing, often judging self, to an increasingly intrapsychic empathy toward oneself.

Relational Empowerment. The relational model sees empowerment as a mutual process where both participants in the relationship can enhance personal power for each. In this sense, mutually empowering interactions (which involve mutual attention, mutual empathy, mutual engagement and mutual responsiveness), build mutually empowering relationships in

connection. Feelings of empowerment become associated with feelings of self-efficacy and greater capacity for self-empathy (Jordan 1990, 43).

Self-in-Relation Model: Resource for African Women. For the African woman, this model names and validates her core self experience of relatedness. It assumes that other aspects of self development (eg., creativity, assertion, etc.) emerge in the context of relationships; that there is no inherent need to sacrifice relationship for self-development. It also provides a powerful lens with which to view some of her psychological problems, as well as developing ideas for facilitating growth-enhancing relationships.

A limitation of the model however, is that there is little inclusion or attention paid to race and class issues. Speaking of the experience of Black women, Diane Goodman confirms this objection:

> The development of these new self-in-relation theories have largely been based on the study of White middle class women.... While the research has made some strong suggestions about women as a group, few studies have included Black women or have specifically considered racial differences (Goodman 1990, 3).

With this injunction, I turn my attention to Black women.

Resources from Black Feminist/Womanist Writings

Though some Black women use the term 'Black feminist,' Alice Walker suggests 'Womanist.' She defines a womanist as

one who is committed to the survival and wholeness of all people, male and female (Walker 1983). Jacquelyn Grant adds to this description:

> A womanist is a Black woman who has sometimes been mislabeled as a domineering castrating matriarch ... one who has developed survival strategies in spite of the oppression of her race and sex in order to save her family and her people ... Womanist just means *being* and *acting* out of who you are. (Grant 1989, 205).

In this paper, I will use womanist or Black feminist interchangeably.

Ever since Sojourner Truth asked her famous question' "Ain't I a woman?" minority women (African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Native American, poor and working-class women) have openly challenged and criticized the failure of contemporary feminism (as White middle class) to include issues of race and class diversity (Rakow 1992, 45). In her question, Sojourner insisted that the victorian ideology of true womanhood as passive and fragile, presented in popular White nineteenth century writings did not fit her experience and that of many Black women who are treated as "mules of the world."

Patricia Collins highlights Black women's need to give voice to their experience and highlights three key themes: Black women's need for self-definition and self-valuation, insistence on the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of Afro-American women's culture (Collins 1986, 1990).

Black women's insistence on self-definition and self-valuation is significant for two reasons. First, this allows them to reject internalized, psychological oppression. Second, self-definition and self-valuation are vital in the face of other-defined images that dehumanize and devalue them. For instance, in the larger American society, portraying Black women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, hot mommas and welfare recipients, has provided powerful ideologies that justify their exploitation and denigration.

The stereotype of mammy typifies the "good" Black mother figure in White homes, and perpetuates the image of a faithful, obedient, but *exploited* domestic servant. The matriarch symbolizes the "bad" Black mother, who fails to fulfil her "womanly" duties, so that the dominant group can blame her for the failures of Black children as in Moynahan's 1974 report (Goodrich et. al. 1986). The hot momma image portrays the Black woman as the Jezebel, whore, and sexually aggressive woman, thus, providing a powerful rationale for the wide spread sexual assaults against her. The image of the welfare mother portrays the Black woman as being content to sit around and collect welfare, shunning work and passing her bad values to her offspring. (This image seems entrenched at my internship site). On a similar note, Linda Webb-Watson asserts that reference to the American "welfare problem" implicitly creates the image of laziness, women having children to stay on welfare, and diverts attention from the

counterproductive results of public policies, and further distracts from solutions that would correct the oppressive system (Webb-Watson 1991, 54).

By attending to the interlocking nature of oppression, Black women assert the interconnections of race, class and gender oppression, insisting that their effects are not just summative but quite complex and multiple. On the other hand, they question the attitude of some White feminists who hold on so much to the concept of multiple oppression, that they ignore the positive aspects of multiple identities. For instance, in her "Open Letter to Mary Daly" to which Daly never replied, Audre Lorde criticized Daly for writing in Gyn/Ecology about aspects of the African culture that were oppressive to women (like 'genital mutilation'), but ignoring those aspects in which women were celebrated and honored as goddesses, queens, amazons and warriors (Daly 1978, Lorde 1984).

Thus, Black feminists call for self-scrutiny, for one cannot assume that one's good intention eliminates the differences between one's privileged position and those of the minority. They caution that in teaching or writing about the oppressive experiences of a group to which one does not belong, one needs to consider ethically, whether or not the work will further reinforce and perpetuate domination. For the African situation, since many of the theories of counseling and psychotherapy originate from Euro-American

White middle class, it is possible that if not adequately scrutinized before application, they could add to the pain of hurting persons, especially women.

Attending to the importance of Black women's culture includes highlighting the lives and contributions of Black women. Alice Walker's efforts to have Zora Neale Hurston's[2] unmarked grave recognized is one such attempt. In addition, there is increasing emerging literature on Black women's achievements as writers, dancers, musicians, artists and actresses (e.g., I Dream a World, Lanker 1989).[3]

In Women Making Meaning, Lana Rakow contends that White women may be victimized by sexism, but racism enables them to act as exploiters and oppressors of Black people. She insists that those Whites who may not see themselves as racists, need to be aware that due to the permeation of racism in every aspect of the American culture, it is present in the very air one breaths, benefitting Whites and distributing burdens to Blacks and minorities. Thus, it may be impossible not to internalize some racist attitudes (Rakow 1992). Bell Hooks confirms this observation.

> Many Black women experienced White women as the white supremacist group who most directly exercised power over them, often in a manner far more brutal and dehumanizing than that of racist White men. Today, despite predominant rule by White

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[2]Zora Neale Hurston was a 20th century womanist writer and storyteller.

[3]A book that gives portraits of Black women who changed America.

> supremacist patriarchs, Black women often work in a similar situation where the immediate supervisor, boss, or authority figure is a White woman (Hooks 1989, 1984).

In addition, Hooks reported that when she participated in a feminist group, White women adopted a condescending attitude towards her and other minority participants and if they dared to challenge the group, they were dismissed and silenced (1984, 11). My four years experience in the United States as a Black woman, has shown me that this silencing continues in conference rooms, classrooms and even in the privacy of cozy living room settings. In my research, I have also come across well meaning White feminists who keep apologizing for their lack of diversity and the absence of minority women in their group of writers and researchers (Goodrich et al. 1986; Miller et al. 1990; Worel & Remer 1992). One wonders why such consistent absence would exist?

Nevertheless, minority women also need to confront "internalized racism," which leads to self-hate, to vent anger and rage at one another, or at White women. Sometimes, Black women's insistence that feminism is really a "White female thing" masks their rage towards White women, a rage rooted in the historical servant-served relationship, where White women used power to dominate, exploit, and oppress them (Hooks 1984, Collins 1991). Black women may need to continually address this rage, opening it up for healing.

In all of this, the Black woman seeks empowerment. Through music, art, poetry, writing, humor, and daily

conversations, she journeys from internalized oppression to self-definition, from silence to speech. In The Color Purple, Walker creates the character of Celie, a Black adolescent girl who is sexually abused by her stepfather. By writing letters to God and forming supportive relationships with other Black women, Celie finds her own voice, which enables her to transcend the fear and silence of her childhood. Sadly, far too many African-American women try to put up with sexually and physically abusive Black males, in defense of a desperately needed, but elusive Black unity. Walker adds Celie's voice to the muted yet growing voices of these women (Walker 1986).

For a White person who sincerely wants to join in Black women's struggle to resist racism, Hooks counsels that they be welcomed. Supported by Paulo Freire's insights, she believes that critical consciousness, rooted in loving action, is the way forward for the empowerment of all women, Black and White alike:

> Working together to face issues of sex, race and class, to identify and face our differences, we need a mediating force that can sustain us so that we are not broken in this process, and not despair. Let us draw upon love to heighten our awareness, deepen our compassion, intensify our courage, and strengthen our commitment (Hooks 1989, 27).

This too, is the call of the African woman as she journeys towards healing and empowerment.

Religious Resources for Psychic Health

We have discussed the pertinent resources for the African woman's psychic health. These included indications of women's psychic health in the African culture. Feminist psychologists added the dimension of validating the relational core of the woman, offering a model through which she can grow through her network of connections. Black womanists' contribution was their insistence on the interlocking nature of oppression; the importance of Black women's culture; and Black woman's need for self-valuation and self-definition.

With regard to religious resources, my main focus is on the centrality of women's experience as the primary source for doing theology. In doing this, I shall draw on the voices of feminist and womanist theologians, especially Catherine Keller and Jacquelyn Grant, as well as contributions of African women theologians. I will end the discussion with a biblical narrative from the women in Mark's story of Jesus.

Women's Experience as the Primary Resource for Doing Theology. A primary feature of the emerging womanist, feminist and African women's liberation theologies is that they regard human experience in general, and women's experience in particular, as the primary source for doing theology. As we shall see in the pages that follow, Catherine Keller's thesis, Jacquelyn Grant's Jesus, and the voices of African women theologians exemplify this standpoint.

God and Women's Relational Self. Keller's thesis recognizes the two poles of male 'separative' self and female 'soluble' self. Moving away from these polarities of having the female "soluble self," as an embodiment of connection without self; and male "separative self" as an incarnation of a self without connection, Catherine Keller proposes what she calls "spider-self" whose selfhood webs both connection and differentiation, integrates being separate and being connected; weaves solitude and connection. This results in four nonpolarities of the self, that invite us to the process of being and becoming, being one and being many, being private and being public, being body and being soul (Keller 1986, 225). Here is Keller's invitation:

> Let us experiment with that sense of relation that begins even now: with this moment's feelings and our own bodies, with the weight of the book and the pulse in the fingers. Let us imagine the radical choreography of all sentient beings. Perhaps we can at the same time begin to retrieve, in the name of connection, those freedoms and solitudes often held under the guardianship of separate selfhood (Keller 1986, 6).

This new way of being in relationship is inclusive of persons, ideas and feelings, the earth, the body, and the untold contents of the present moment. This requires coming to an empowering center, a place of inner and outer freedom in which this new way of being-in relationship can happen. And for Keller, coming to this new place is at the basis of a fundamentally relational spirituality. This spirituality is

rooted in the experience of the self as relational.[4]

Sadly however, classical theology (created out of a male mythos of independence and self-transcendence) has presented metaphors of a pure self reflexive, independent God, who is non relational, self-sufficient and passionless. And these metaphors have stood firmly even with little scriptural justification. Keller explains:

> Despite scripture and piety suggesting a more emotionally engaged relation, this One is shaped by Aristotle's idea of the deity absorbed in eternal self-contemplation (the *nous noein*) (Keller 1986, 37).

Drawing from Whiteheadian process thought which implies a dynamic-receptive God, a passionate "Being-in-relationship," Keller maintains that as long as God is imagined and named in mainly masculine metaphors, there will be no room for christianity's conversion to a fundamentally relational spirituality - a spirituality that is at the basis of not just women's experience but of men as well.

Keller refers to our engagement in this spirituality as "divining the web," in which metaphors for the divine become those of connection:

> All things become tied to the matrix of interconnection, the one true cord, / the umbilical line / unwinding into meaning, / transformation, / web of thought and caring and connection...an internalized whorl of relations, calling forth a richer Self (Keller 1986, 248).

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[4]Beverly Harrison, Dorothee Solle, Maragret Huff and other feminist liberation theologians maintain that the divine presence is embodied in our relational selves.

Thus, the parental, self-sufficient God, dies and a new God/dess (a new *divine*). This divine is experienced as a matrix of interconnections, as exemplified by Shug in Alice Walker's Color Purple:

> One day, when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed (Walker 1982, 167).

In proposing the matrix of interconnectedness, Keller adds to the missing piece in the self-in-relation model, which limits relationality to individual persons. In this sense, her thesis touches the core of the African woman's relational nature with persons, spirits, nature, the Supreme Being; and her sense of oneness with the whole cosmos.[5] Thus, the metaphor of "Spider-God" (which emerged for me from reading Keller's thesis), speaks to the experience of the African woman.

Keller also points to the implications of imaging God as transcendent or immanent. The immanent God is concrete in finite human experiences. Therefore, women can trust their experiences as entry points for God at work in their lives. Though somewhat distorted by classical theology, the transcendence of God prevents us from deifying our experiences, so that God is always more than our experience of

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[5]"The African cosmos is like a spider web: its least element cannot be touched without making the whole vibrate. Everything cooperates to make one unity" (Baldwin 1992, 75).

God.

Black Women's Jesus. Boyd-Franklin asserts that spirituality is deeply embedded in the Black psyche and therefore is at the root of the survival skills of many Black women (Boyd-Franklin 1989). Jacquelyn Grant supports this, insisting that it is out of their particular experience of oppression and survival, that the Black woman does her 'everyday' theology. Regarding the experience of christian Black women, Grant highlights Jesus' significance in their lives - a significance which is rooted in Jesus humanity (not in his maleness). In Jesus, God becomes concrete, embodied in their particular struggles with racist oppression. And so, these women's affirmation of Jesus as God meant that White people were not God (Grant 1989, 213).

Furthermore, Jesus' own definition of his mission was to the poor and lowly (cf. Lk 4:18). This means that as Jesus identified with the lowly of his day, he identifies with Black women as they endure racism, sexism and economic oppression. Grant explains:

> To affirm Jesus' solidarity (with Black women) is not an exercise in romanticized contentment with one's oppressed status in life. For as the resurrection signified that there is more to life than the cross for Jesus Christ, for Black women it signifies that their tri-dimensional oppressive existence is not the end, but merely represents the context in which a particular people struggle to experience hope and liberation (Grant 1989, 217).

In the interest of White supremacist domination, theologians taught Blacks that Jesus meant docility, meekness

and mildness, in the face of physical brutalities of racial oppression. But posing Jesus question ("who do you say I am?") to Black women invites them to speak their own voice, to become *subjects*, the primary definers of their experience of Jesus.

Grant's summary of their response include, "you are one of us, Sister, Co-sufferer, our God, the Lord, Savior, the Black Messiah, the Liberator, who is among us in our community, affirms us and empowers us to persevere in the struggle, to move from mere survival to redemptive liberation (Grant 1990, 213). It is this Jesus that was the starting point of Sojourner Truth's text, "When I found Jesus!"[6]; this too was the Jesus of the slave woman who prayed: "come to we, dear massa Jesus. De sun, he hot too much, de road am dat long and boggy (sandy) and we ain't got no buggy for send and fetch Ooner..." (Grant 1989, 212) It is this same Jesus that sustains today's Black woman as she claims her liberation and that of her people. Like these women, Black African women have also become subjects in defining their personal and collective experience of Jesus.

<u>African Women's Jesus</u>. For Black African women, Jesus is one who empowers the weak, the oppressed and the marginalized. He is the anointed one, the companion, teacher, the caring

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[6]Sojourner Truth was the daughter of slave parents from Africa, known for her famous civil rights speech "ain't I a woman?'

compassionate nurturer of all, and 'true' child of women (Amoah & Oduyoye, 1989). Thus, Jesus becomes for the African woman (and for Africa), the God of Liberation, and remains her ally, as she struggles for the transformation of herself and her context.

African women's prayers (shown below), reveal their lived experience of Jesus, a christology that they silently weave into the tapestry of their daily lives:

> Yesu who has received us poor and made us honorable; you are the one who makes the sterile give birth to twins; wise friend, we depend on you as the tongue depends on the jaw... against evil forces, you are the rock, we hide under you; the great bush with cooling shades; the giant tree who enables the climbers to see the heavens... Yesu, the great Healer, doctor of sick people; the chief farmer who gives us foodstuff ... when you walk in the darkness you do not need a lamp; when we walk with you and meet war, we have no fear; ... (Adapted from Amoah & Oduyoye 1989, 42).

Thus, the starting point of their 'unwritten' theology is their experience as Black women and as Africans. In solidarity with them, African women theologians[7] are insisting that African theologies cannot be a meaningful empowering force for Africans, if women do not participate as equals, with women's experience as legitimate data for theological reflection. They assert that christianity can no longer afford to ignore even a single African woman's experience. Challenging the arts and painting that deny and ignore women's experience, they maintain that the church in Africa must

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[7]These women theologians include: Mercy Oduyoye, Theresa Okure, Zoe Obianga, Kanyoro, and so on.

reflect the feminine face of God as in African indigenous religion. They call for the use of inclusive language and feminine images, as they challenge the entrenched patriarchal presuppositions of the Bible.

In this regard, Elizabeth Fiorenza (a feminist theologian) encourages women to critique biblical narratives by applying what she calls a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' - questioning the facts in the light of their experience, and recreating the narrative from a woman's point of view (Fiorenza 1983).

These African women theologians also see as a sign of hope, the present trend among independent churches where women are reclaiming some of their indigenous priestly (and healing) ministries, within a christian context. These women leaders have chosen to break loose from the main-line male dominated churches to found their own where they can exercise fulfilling ministry. Examples include the Alice Leshina of Zambia, the Mai Chaza of Zimbabwe, Mrs. Paul of Transkei, Alice Lakwena of Uganda, all of which have drawn crowds to their ministries. The christologies of these churches may differ from the traditional Western ones, but the Christ that they identify with is one with a human face, who is deeply interested in their soul's longings; present to them on their farms, market places, and in their domestic chores.

And so, together, their common echo is: "EMPOWER WOMEN!" Standing as servants, and working together ecumenically, their

goal is to break the silence that has led to minimal and inadequate participation of women in decisions that affect their lives, convinced that in Jesus' death, the patriarchal god has died. In his resurrection, we have an inclusive God! I will present in Chapter IV, a possible model for an on-going collective empowerment for the women of Africa.

Furthermore, theological investigation into the experiences of christian Black women shows that the bible is a major resource for religious validation in their lives, with Jesus as the central frame of reference (Grant 1989, 211). What follows therefore, are narratives of some biblical women, as further resources for the Black African woman.

Resources from Religious Narrative. Story-telling is an important component of the African oral culture and daily experience. The stories that follow are my attempt to honor this important dimension of the African woman, who often is the 'carrier' of oral tradition, which she passes on to her children's children. Furthermore, these stories touch aspects of health and wounding that simultaneously co-exist in the African woman's psyche. Jesus' encounter with the women in these stories further testifies that oppression and psychic injury will surely give way to healing and empowerment.

Markan Stories of Healing and Empowerment. Yes! God's happiness is like a woman's who, having lost a coin, lights

her lamp and carefully searches the whole house until she finds it. She then invites her friends and neighbors to share her joy at having found her precious coin (Luke 15:8-10). The following narrative continues her proclamation of joy and hope.

The woman in Mk. 5:25 who suffers the curse of being a woman due to her hamorrahge, becomes the symbol for the issue of female sexuality in the African context. Breaking many rules while seeking healing, this woman touches Jesus and converses with him. Her radical faith was rewarded with health. Jesus does not send her away to purify herself (as in the cure of the leper, 1:40), neither does he himself make any move towards purification, as required by purification law (Lev. 15:19-25). Deliberately and publicly, he manifests that neither defilement nor curse is connected with female sexuality. He invites her to tell her story so that her healing will not go unnoticed but will reach down to <u>every</u> woman in every place and time. By calling her daughter of Abraham, Jesus also restores this courageous woman to the community.[8]

This woman calls the African woman to believe in her dignity, to trust her intuition and the wisdom within her body. She calls the African woman to an inclusive vision where no one is labelled "unclean," and empowers her to break through the barriers of laws and traditions.

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[8]"<u>Daughter of Abraham</u>, your faith has made you well" (5:34).

The Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk. 7:24) portrays a gentile who came to Jesus, seeking healing for her daughter, and persisted until she got what she requested. In the process, she challenges Jesus to expand his consciousness and his horizons. For her, no wall or barriers are too difficult or too great to surmount. By her practicality, her earthiness and persistence, she calls forth to consciousness, this treasured aspect of the African woman.

In Mk. 12: 18-24, Mark tells the story of a woman who married seven brothers. Expressed in this story is the subtle attitude of the Sadducees, that in every period of her life, a woman had to live on the shadow of a man. Jesus, in his response, challenges this notion by affirming the dignity of a woman for who she is. How appropriate this message is for today's African woman!

The anonymous woman who anoints Jesus in Mk.14:3-9, seems to make sense of what appears to be the senselessness of Jesus' death. In a society where women were not supposed to know deep truths, this woman seem to have understood the deepest truth of all. Boldly, she responded appropriately.[9] Wouldn't this apply to women of Africa?

In Mk.15: 1-40, Mark lists the names of some women present at Jesus' death and burial. This scene portrays the fidelity of these women disciples in accompanying Jesus to the

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[9]Fiorenza's book In memory of Her was named for this woman (Fiorenza 1986).

very end. They continue to find meaning in spite of everything. They speak to the African woman as she grapples with meaning; with the apparent unfairness of life; experiencing life both as unconcerned and gracious. And so, as she stands and waits before light and darkness, she hears the whisperings of a Mystery beyond, that persistently beckons, "*come to Me and find the meaning that you seek.*"

Mark closes his gospel with the story of the empty tomb, Mk.16: 1-8: a story about women coming to the tomb, to anoint Jesus after his death. Once they reach the grave, all their expectations are reversed. They look for a tomb filled with a corpse and they find it empty of death; they expect a stone to seal it, and they find the stone rolled away; they expect no word from the grave but they receive a clear message. In prayer, I hear these women, our foremothers, call African women to walk in solidarity and in openness to the God of surprises.

As African women embark on this journey, with the women in Mark's story of Jesus, they walk with greater confidence, knowing that it is the same Jesus who, in Mark's story, is full of concern for the women of his time, who also is standing with them in their particular context. Rise, my sisters, let us go...

CHAPTER IV

CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR HEALING AND EMPOWERMENT

The previous chapter explored the resources for psychic health within and for the African woman. My main thesis in this chapter is that while the psychic realm is important, the context of hurting persons needs to be simultaneously attended to in order for healing and empowerment to happen. The context I speak of includes social, political, religious, cultural and ecological realities that are constantly impacting on the individual psyche. Supportive, empowering contexts facilitate psychic healing; while blaming environments retard healing and revictimize. Real empowerment must therefore be inclusive of contextual change.

Our discussion will first highlight the emerging voices within contemporary psychotherapy on the importance of context. Next, I shall elucidate the various aspects of the African context. The final section will address what healing and empowerment really entails in the African woman's context.

My primary resource for this study is my personal experience. Other important resources include feminist voices, Africentric psychologists, James Hilman from the Jungian tradition, L.V. Bell's work on psychotherapy in contemporary Africa, and Paul Valley's work, Bad Samaritans.

A Personal Testimony

As I write these pages, my psyche and my context are in constant mutual interaction, for better or for worse. I came to this realization in the context of my life's journey, especially through a significant event.

Four years ago, I was diagnosed as having brain tumor. The days, weeks and months that followed 'forced' me to seriously enter into the dark night of my own inner journey, to my inner pain and woundedness; in fact, to my inner tumor.

Providentially, I was undergoing a program at the Institute of Spiritual Leadership (ISL), whose primary focus was intrapsychic journey and conversion. Through the process, I have been gifted with inner healing and fuller life.

While focussed attention to the intrapsychic dimension of my life's journey continues, my recent experience challenges a model of therapy that exclusively attends to psyche without context. For instance, all the clients I have had to deal with at my internship site are Black. Most of them are victims of sexual and physical abuse, poverty and racial discrimination. The DSM-III-R (which is the primary mode of diagnosis) does not explicitly address any of these contextual issues which are greatly impacting on their functioning. Instead, it tends to blame them for their 'pathological' survival mechanisms.

However, I want to clearly state that I do not advocate that therapy just focuses on context, without attending to

psychic issues. My stance is that both psyche and contextual issues are important both in diagnosis and treatment.

Contemporary Voices on the Importance of Context

Feminist Voices. Western feminists assert that traditional therapy tends to focus solely on intrapsychic make-up, ignoring the role that client's social, political, economic and cultural environment plays in psychopathology. Even theories that do acknowledge environmental impact often frame the goals of counseling to focus solely on intrapsychic change (Worell & Remer 1992, 85).

Although clients cannot be totally exempt from personal responsibility for their problems, or from their responsibility for change, a solely intrapsychic causation model suggests that changes should occur only with the client and not with the environment. Clients are therefore falsely assured that they can "fix" themselves within an oppressive situation by adjusting their behavior and thinking patterns (Worell and Remer 1992, 119). Furthermore, mental health professionals implicitly reinforce the norm that cheerful adjustment to say poverty is healthy, while anger or despondency in the face of sociopolitical pathologies is sick (Webb-Watson 1991, 55).

But then, total attention to the client's internal conflicts without simultaneously considering the environmental

contributions often makes therapists blame clients for aspects of their problems that are societaly induced. Worell and Remer refer to this as the phenomenon of "blaming the victim." The individual is blamed and held responsible for displaying behavior, thoughts and feelings developed for coping within a restricting and oppressive environment.

Feminist voices insist on the principle that 'the Personal is Political.' Therefore, "therapy must stop trying to fix up people so that the system works better, but start fixing up the system so that people work better; for there is no integrity in working to empower women if one is not also engaged in addressing structural imbalances." Failing to do this, therapists may be participating in system-maintaining oppression through their roles (Goodrich et. al. 1986, Worell & Remer 1992).

Feminist insistence on the importance of context is grounded in social psychology research which has shown that pathological environments can, in a very short time, produce pathology in normal, healthy people (Worell and Remer 1992, 162). Minority groups are even at a greater risk, because over time, their low social status and the pervasive societal discrimination, show up in different forms of pathology. Greenspan calls these pathological responses "hidden protests" - indirect protests of the powerless (Greenspan 1983).

For women in particular, feminist therapists lament that even though the DSM-III-R is considered the most sexist

diagnostic system, it still prevails in most mental health institutions (Brown 1987, Franks 1986, Worell 1986, Walker 1986, Briere 1986, Kaplan 1983, Greenspan 1983).[1]

Let us take the example of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Clinicians generally have negative attitudes toward these clients. Yet, there is research evidence that women who were sexually abused as children fit the DSM-III-R description of BPD. So why not label it "Post-sexual-abuse Syndrome"?, asks Briere (1984). With regard to sexual and spouse abuse, Walker proposes a new diagnostic criteria called "Abuse Disorders" instead of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Walker 1986). She also remarks that the diagnosis of "Self-defeating Personality disorder" (often given to women), mislabels environmental pathology as individual pathology in women, because the descriptions for this diagnosis fit the symptoms of women who have been abused by their spouses. Furthermore, Brown suggests a new diagnostic classification called "Oppression Artifact Disorder," to be a disorder attributed to life-time living in a sexist, racist, homophobic, and oppressive context (Brown 1987). These feminists also suggest a similar overhaul of psychological testing systems (Worell and Remer 1992).

In sum, feminists insist that psychotherapy must begin to pay adequate attention to context, both in diagnosis and treatment.

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[1]Quoted from Worell and Remer 1992.

Africentric[2] Voices. These Black psychologists follow a similar trend as feminists, particularly emphasizing the political nature of psychotherapy. Voices in this field include Wilson, Wright, Marimba, Baldwin, Nobles, etc.

As a discipline, Black psychology is in a state of development, with a diversity of writings among its proponents. The deconstructionists among them are exposing the weaknesses of Western psychology, asking it to modify its conventional and accepted practices.[3] The reconstructionists are "reconstructing" Western psychology to a more sensitive and relevant model.[4] The constructionist camp are constructing models of Black personality that are more authentic to African definitional systems.[5]

I do not intend to delve into the details of the works of each of these groups. I will however, highlight their cumulative contribution regarding the political nature of psychotherapy. Wilson asserts this point:

> A major departure of Black psychology from Eurocentric or White psychology is the fact that Black psychology is openly and consciously political, and recognizes that the very basis for what we might call mental problems or other kinds of problems in the Black community, is the political structure of the Eurocentric structure that is present in America, and present in the

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[2]'Africentric' is a shortened version for 'African centered.'

[3]Proponents include Lawson 1980, Hilliard 1981, etc.

[4]Members of this group include Jackson 1982, Akbar 1976, King 1980, etc.

[5]Proponents: Baldwin 1992, Nobles 1986, Bolton 1982, etc.

world (Wilson 1993, 65).

As with the case of Black women in America (discussed in chapter II) they hold that there are political ideological contradictions that are used for blaming Blacks for creating their pathology.

One example is the ideology of individualism which is used to justify the culture of inequality. This ideology tries to present everyone as equal, with equal resources and opportunities. It encourages individuals to dream big dreams, to imagine that the best of everything is within everyone's reach; and at the same time denies some individuals the possibility of having these dreams come true. It is like these individuals are provoked to stand up while their legs are "broken" at the same time. They are then told that it is their fault if they do not realize their dreams.

Another contradiction is that good fortune, success, wealth, etc. is the result of hard work. If this were true, then Blacks would have been reaping the fruits of the hard work of their ancestors, whose hard labor (in the plantations) helped to create a rich America. Yet, Blacks rank among the poorest in the American society. Their failure is often attributed to laziness and crime. Little or no reference is made to the societal evil by which Black slaves labored for the wealth which is now enjoyed by the Whites in America.

Webb-Watson further explains how the White Supremacist system is able to maintain its contradictory ideologies:

> The system uses the control of the media to maintain its distortion by directing peoples attention from asking the right questions and by proffering a host of material delights. The system educates the powerless only marginally, usually just enough for them to feel obsolete and to experience themselves as being poor approximations of the images that dominate society... (Webb-Watson 1991, 56).

The political ideology of contradiction (wilfully used by White supremacy) is not merely a means of justifying the status quo. It also serves to create an abnormal state of mind in Blacks. Many Blacks have come to accept these political contradictions mostly unconsciously. Thus, their failures as individuals or groups result in the destruction of self-respect and self-esteem, creating psychic pathologies. The individual or group is then diagnosed as neurotic or psychotic, but not the "sick" society of enormous contradictions. Thus, the politics of therapeutic diagnosis is as much a part of the problem as it claims to be a part of the solution. Wilson laments:

> It is the people who are ready to go war, have gone to war and destroyed hundreds and thousands of people who talk about peace; the people who destroy children's minds who talk a great deal about education... Then, there are welfare systems that keep us poor; foreign aid that keep African nations in poverty; religious institutions that send people to hell... It is this kind of system that needs to be diagnosed, for it breeds mental problems! (Wilson 1993, 83).

Ironically, the more the societal system produces pathological 'monsters,' the louder it cries for more social workers, more welfare, more therapists, sundry helping

professions and more prisons. These are all band-aid solutions, that do not seriously challenge the oppressive society that produces these monsters.

Thus, Black psychology asserts that from its very basis, Eurocentric psychology has failed Black people. In fact, it has resulted in their dehumanization.[6] Like Frantz Fanon in chapter I, Africentric voices insist on the political nature of psychological health and pathology.

James Hilman. Hilman is neither a feminist nor Africentric psychologist. His unique contribution is that as a Jungian analyst, he speaks out of a tradition that primarily focusses on the psyche and ignores context. Nonetheless, he boldly acknowledges that the present intrapsychic nature of psychotherapy needs overhauling, to include context. His notion of "empty protest" allows one to protest this tunnel vision in the present practice of psychotherapy, without forcing the one who protests to produce premature solutions.

Defining the 'self' as the interiorization of community, Hilman goes so far as to say that psychotherapy has to seriously attend to the contextual dimension of the self, or become meaningless. He explains:

In the face of a world filled with symptoms,

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[6]Jung for instance maintained that certain pathologies found among Americans were due to the presence of Black people in America (Nobles 1986, 4).

> psychotherapy comforts itself by falsely believing that its curing the outer world by making better people through the inner process (Hilman 1992, 6).

For instance, while emotions connect us to our contexts, psychotherapy invites its seekers to just look inside themselves for the roots of these emotions, processing the psyche like processed food. It does not encourage one to also explore what one's emotion could be saying about contextual wounding.

Psychotherapy continues to compress people into a false normality. It has become a safe haven for the mediocre, a sedation, an anesthesia that calms one down, in order to find acceptance in the middle ground of mediocrity. It must instead ask about the plight of the world: the plight of its poor, the suffering of its oceans, its air and forests, the depletion of its soils and resources, etc.

Hilman recommends that "every psychotherapy room be a cell of revolution." By revolution he means turning over the systems that made one go to therapy in the first place, be it national security, official secrets, racial discrimination, etc. He insists that even "empty protests"[7] of these contextual pathological conditions is far better that ignoring or remaining blind to them.

With Hilman, Afrocentric and feminist psychologists, I

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[7]By "empty protest" Hilman means, knowing in the depth of one's being that something stinks (like in the case of Western psychotherapy), simply protesting without forcing premature solutions (1992, 104).

strongly advocate attending to psyche and context in any therapeutic process, whether group or individual therapy. An important question for therapy then becomes, 'what in the context is adding to (or producing) the individual or group pathology; what in the context contributes to healing?' I shall explore these questions within the African context.

The African Context

This section will first explore how today's African context is shaped by power imbalances in its relations with the West. My particular focus will be in the area of economics, embedded within the three phases of colonialism, and Western 'aid.' I do not intend to present a detailed study of colonialism and Western aid in Africa. My intention is simply to illustrate their pathological impact on the African context, insisting that psychotherapy, (including the models I propose in chapter IV), must not be blind to these realities. A discussion on the African view of personality will hopefully point to the tenets of healing that exist within the African context.

Africa's relationship with the West is deeply rooted in power imbalances; what Larry Graham calls *'victimizing and intractable power*[8] imbalances.' (Graham 1992). This means that in their relations with Africa, the West has consistently imposed and used power arrangements to their advantage, and to

[8]The italics are mine.

the continued disadvantage of Africans. As we shall see later, Paul Valley shows how this reality lies behind the horror scenes of poverty, hunger and disease found in Africa.

Africa and the West: Three Phases of Colonialism. Paul Valley, a (former) British editor of Times Magazine, maintains that the countries of the West have masked insidious power imbalance through three phases of colonialism: *colonialism of plunder, Colonialism of unfair trade and Colonialism at arms length*.

The relationship between colonialism and the erosion of the African woman's power was already discussed in Chapter I. The point I want to make here is that through plunder and wealth amassment, the colonial masters of the West extracted enormous wealth from Africa: humans (slaves), plantations, raw materials, minerals, etc. For instance, between 1757 and 1815, Britain is said to have extracted a value of about 1,000 million pounds from the colonies, at a time when British national income was only 125 million pounds (Valley 1990, 89).

The Western churches also joined in the venture. Africans say of the churches that, "when they came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. And then they said, 'Let us pray.' And when we opened our eyes, we had the Bible and they had the land!" (Wlabert 1979, 45). Moreover, the irony is that as "Christian" countries, the rich nations of the West have kept believing that their amassed wealth is

God's gift to them.

The second phase of colonialism is that of unfair trade. Colonial policy enforced that colonies export their raw materials to the imperial motherland, to be manufactured. This policy protected their domestic industries. This legacy of colonialism means that today, nearly all the so-called independent countries of Africa, earn about 50% of their income through sale of raw materials. They are constantly trying to produce more raw materials hoping for more money from their products. Thus, many African countries favor cash crop production at the expense of producing enough food for local consumption. But then, their raw material become over-supplied in the world market and their prices fall ever lower. In 1985, a staggering $19,000 million was lost by African countries by a price collapse in the world markets[9] while the prices of processed goods keep skyrocketing.

Therefore, the economic power imbalances established in the phase of plunder (added to protectionist policies that protected colonial industries), put the West in an advantaged position. As if this was not enough, the West further enforced free trade policy. Valley explains what this means:

> Instead of each country being self-sufficient, each should produce what it could produce most cheaply, the commodities in which it had what they called a

[9]The State of the World's Children 1990 Report, Unicef

> *comparative commodity*[10], and then exchange their goods with what could be bought elsewhere; thus, everything would be produced more cheaply and everyone would be better off (Valley 1990, 92).

Because it was imposed from a starting point of inequality, the free trade policy has systematically widened the gap between the rich and poor. Valley observes:

> When those initial inequalities are built on the policy of piracy, bullying and slaughter which Europe pursued, and then United States and Japan later acquiesced in, then free trade is no longer the neutral value-free mechanism of neo-classical theory but an instrument to maintain and indeed increase injustice. The structure may masquerade as neutral but in fact, it has a hidden immoral bias (Valley 1990, 92).

This is further compounded by the fact that today, the United States, the European community (EC) and Japan, the countries who most loudly advocate free trade for the so-called Third World, themselves maintain protectionist barriers. Here we see an example of hypocrisy in addition to structural sin and evil: despite their rhetoric about aid to Africa, the West devised and imposed trading policies that continue to worsen the problems of Africa, especially the poor.

Colonialism at Arms Length continue the same trend: to disadvantage Africans to the benefit of Western countries.

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[10]Under the theory of comparative trade, only colonial administrators decided what natural strength a colony had (always to the benefit of colonial domestic industries) and then maximized it. Existing patterns of agriculture were wiped out and replaced with huge plantations.

There are three entrenched institutions through which this imbalance is perpetuated: trade policies (discussed above), the so-called multinational companies and thirdly, the international financial system.

Multinationals - Partners Or Profiteers?. This is the second system through which the West continues neo-colonialism. Valley asserts that multinational companies are the major actors in the world's economy controlling over 40% of world trade. In 1976, the total sales of their foreign affiliates were estimated at $830,000 million, about the same as the Gross National Product of all the so-called Third World put together, excluding oil exporters.[11]

Multinationals claim that they bring resources of technology to the so-called developing countries, but these are often expensive and inappropriate for their context; they claim to bring capital, whereas research has shown that 80% of multinational investment is raised in the country of operation; they claim to bring prosperity whereas what they actually promote is Western materialism; they claim to bring marketing and management skills, to which there is some truth. But then, the 'poor' country of operation pays a very high price. This includes, cheap labor, starvation, weak or

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[11]North-South: A Program for Survival, report of the Independent Commission on International Development issues under the Chairmanship of Willy Brandt, Pan Books, London, 1980.

non-existent trade unions, lack of environmental laws, resulting in pollution, desertification, depletion of the ozone and consequent global warming.

Often, multinationals acquire their land through the eviction of the peasant poor. In some cases, they encourage local people to plough up land previously used to grow food for local consumption, and use it for growing export crops. In Kenya for example, where maize once grew, there are now flowers which are taken in refrigerated vans and by air to Europe. In Mali, food production has fallen by 10% but cotton output is eight-fold. In Nigeria and other African countries, where black beans once grew, there are now soya beans. With World Bank and corrupt African governments' support, the acreage has increased twenty-fold. This is exported to the West for animal feed, while the price of beans in the local markets can no longer be afforded by the poor. So, while the animals in the West are feeding well, humans in Africa are dying of malnutrition and starvation.

The most insidious scandal is that multinationals are not accountable to anyone, except to their shareholders, whose sole interest is to make profit. This system masks systemic sin which "buys the work of the poor for a pittance and sells it for a profit far higher than is considered 'normal' in trade relations between nations" (Valley 1990, 119).

Multinational influence is also changing the taste and life-style of people in Africa through their increasing mass

media, especially in the area of advertisements, films, etc. For instance, with massive promotion of their product, powdered milk companies have succeeded in making many mothers in Africa abandon breast feeding. Not only has the product become very expensive, it is less nutritious. The result is that many mothers can no longer afford powdered milk; some are illiterate and cannot read the printed directions and so, over-dilute the milk to make it stretch. Malnutrition and high infant mortality are the unfortunate consequences. Today, there is no part of black Africa which is not being continually Westernized. Some African cities are replicas of cities in the West. The life-style (including crime rate) in these cities are similar to those in the West.

Principalities And Powers: IMF and World Bank Schemes. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank represent the third system of colonial domination at arms length. In 1944, forty-four of the world's nations came together in New Hampshire to set up the IMF to provide short-term loans to member countries; and World bank to provide long-term loans for developmental projects, to be paid off over 15 to 20-year period.

To borrow from IMF, countries had to join the Fund and pay a membership fee called a "quota" in proportion to its economic strength. Votes are allocated according to each country's quota. Because the Soviet Union refused to join,

United States paid the largest quota and took enormous votes, while the whole of Black Africa received fewer votes than the United Kingdom. Thus, the United States, United Kingdom and their European allies exercise the most voice in the policies of IMF. Therefore, at its very foundation, IMF exemplifies another contextual pathology in which the 'poor' nations are robbed of their right to participate equally in a body that has decisive effect on their economy.

IMF policy is that the more a nation borrows, the stricter IMF-imposed conditions. With regard to Africa, its basic attitude is that their economies are badly managed. So, they need *'structural adjustment'* programs to help them balance their budget. To some extent, this allegation is true, essentially due to corruption among the Western-groomed African governments. However, far from helping to balance the budget, IMF austerity programs soars unemployment, increases taxes, inflates prices, devalues the currency, etc. The poor who are already close to starvation are mandated to 'tighten' their belts! It is estimated that IMF adjustment programs have cost more than a million deaths.[12]

I was ministering in Zambia in 1986 when Kenneth Kaunda (the president) was pressured by IMF to remove the subsidy on *mealie meal* (made from maize), which was the only affordable food of the poor. These poor who had reached their limit protested and rioted. Frustrated, Kaunda broke with IMF in

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[12] From a Report by Richard Jolly of Unicef.

1986. But then, the British government immediately withheld a value of 30 million pounds in program aid from Zambia. US and other Western countries did the same.

This experience of struggling under the "heavy burden" of IMF 'structural adjustment' (and being trapped in it) is replicated in all the countries of Black Africa.

Yet, the contradictions of IMF are obvious. Though (it is estimated) that the United States budget deficit is twice the entire debt of all the so-called Third World nations put together, IMF has not imposed its stringent structural adjustment program on the US. Furthermore, the United States continues its extravagant spending, while the 'poor' countries of Africa struggle with the bare necessities of life.

Worse still, in trading with the 'poor' countries, the US has had to keep its interest rates high, to attract the money it needs to finance its deficit. Thus, US extravagance and life-style is subsidized in a long indirect chain by the poorest countries.

Moreover, IMF and World Bank seem oblivious of their part in the fate of the African countries. In the 60s and 70s, they advocated and only approved large-scale prestige-like projects: massive dams, airports, new capital cities, universities, etc, which gobbled up huge budgets. These were spent almost exclusively in the West buying high-tech equipment, sophisticated construction material, and the expertise of Western specialists. Most of the projects were

either abandoned unfinished, or 'are monstrous elephants' needing enormous budget to maintain.

So, IMF and the World Bank system present yet another structural sin and pathology in which the complexity of finance is used to disguise the magnitude of the exploitation of African countries (Valley 1990).

Western Aid to Africa. This section will explore the "hidden" intricacies of Western aid to Africa. It will highlight how the bulk of this aid is not really aid but means of furthering Western interests and exploitation.

In the United States and in Ireland, I have heard stories of how school children were made to save their pennies for the 'poor Black babies' in the "missions." Over the news, I have also heard announcements of 'generous' aid packages given by the US government to help the starving poor.

What all this has done to me (and to so many) is to keep us thinking that the "rich" world helps the poor by sending aid and donations. The sad and evident reality is that *the overall flow of resources is not from rich to poor, but from poor to rich.* Figures published by the World bank show that in 1985, the total amount of emergency aid to Africa was around $3,000 million dollars. In the same year, Africa paid $6,000 million in debt payment to the so-called First World institutions.[13]

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[13]*The State of the World's Children 1990 report, Unicef*

How Aid Works. There are three types of aid; *Multilateral aid*: contributions which rich countries make to international bodies like the World Bank; *Private aid*: raised directly from the public through aid agencies like the Red Cross; *Bilateral aid*: direct transfer of food, goods, cash or services from the First to the Third World countries.

Bilateral aid which accounts for 70% of all aid appears the most abused. It is not simply a tool to help the poorest but to further foreign policies and commercial interests. Nixon, once the United States president admitted this frankly, "let us remember that the main purpose of American aid is not to help other nations but to help ourselves" (Valley 1990, 77). In the same vein, British bilateral aid is geared more to the needs of British industries.

The bulk of bilateral aid is in cash, and donors often insist that the money can only be spent on goods and services purchased from their own country - a system that is known as *tied aid*. Estimates are that African countries governments find it 20% to 40% more expensive to buy with tied aid than to buy the same product in the open world market.

Another exploitation of tied aid is that the 'poor' countries are pressed to take types of aid they do not want. An example of this is described by the Independent Group on British Aid:

> In December 1985 George Hughes, the managing director of Willowbrook, a coach and bus body manufacturer in the midlands (who had given a value of 50,000 pounds contribution to the conservative

> party funds) was awarded a contract to supply buses on chassis to Zambia. The grant was awarded against the advice of our own High Commissioner in Zambia. It appears that the buses (unsuited for the difficult roads) fell to pieces within a short space of time (Valley 1990, 81).

And then, Britain highly publicized their 'generous' aid to Zambia. Many African countries continue to experience similar exploitation from the West.

Aid has also become a means for the West to dictate and enforce repressive polices in Africa. A few examples illustrate this point. In the Reagan years, Sudan received $I billion in US aid. But then, Washington held back large sums of it until Nimeiri lifted government subsidies on food, petrol and other essential commodities. When he eventually did, the result was massive riot and loss of lives, in addition to the hunger and poverty that ensued.

The largest food aid donor is the United States. Public law 480 spells out its purpose as:

> the expansion of US agricultural and commercial export markets ... and make maximum efficient use of surplus agricultural commodities in furtherance of foreign policy of the United States (Valley 1990, 78).

Critics of the United States Agency for International Development document that during the Sudan famine relief program, the US "acted with self-confidence bordering on arrogance in not involving the Sudanese government in the operation - all done to realize US interests."

Under the Reagan administration, military aid became a

larger component of overall US aid. Between 1980 and 1985, military aid to Sub-Saharan Africa grew to 40% - all to the furtherance of US political interests. No wonder the increased dictatorship, civil wars and military coups in Black Africa. The conclusion Keith Griffin arrived at is that, "in practice, foreign aid ... appears to be doing little more than sustain corrupt regimes in power."[14]

Using the analogy of good and bad samaritans, Valley asserts that the West has been "Bad Samaritans" to Africa; for they do not simply pass by the injured man, but crossover and announce their intention to help; they take the man to the inn, but fail to admit that he was injured by their agents; the silver they pay for his convalescence is only a tiny portion of what these agents stole from him. This is another pathological and sinful structure where the things which masquerade as aid, are really tools of further exploitation of the poor.

Contemporary Psychotherapy in Africa

I have tried to illustrate how human problems in today's Africa are shaped by the structural pathologies embedded in Africa's relations with the West. The next discussion will attempt to paint in broad strokes, the present face of

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[14] Report by Griffin, on *World Hunger and the World Economy.*

"Westernized"[15] psychotherapy[16] in Africa - another aspect of the African context that will inform strategies for healing and empowerment.

Westernized psychotherapy generally ignores the African context in the diagnosis and treatment of psychopathology, despite convincing evidence about contextually related pathology.

We saw in Chapter I that as early as the colonial times, the African psychiatrist, Frantz Fanon, directly linked what he termed "colonial personality" with the colonial domination in Algeria. Over a period of twenty years, Bateson, G. (anthropologist and psychiatrist) developed a linking of this degeneration of personality with the etiology of schizophrenia among the colonized (McCulloch 1983, 123).

A colonial medical officer (Carothers, J.C.), in charge of Mathore mental hospital in Kenya, reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) that when exposed to Western imposed culture, many Africans had identity conflict, a condition that led to psychotic disruption (Bell, 1991). Even though some Western observers questioned this observation (e.g., Cunygham 1938), I, as an African, know the pain and confusion involved in the constant struggle to define my African identity, while continually torn between the values of Westernization and

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[15]I use the term "Westernized" to distinguish it from the Indigenous form of psychotherapy.

[16]Even though I use the term "psychotherapy," its main form of practice (in African) is "Psychiatry."

those of indigenous Africa. I have also witnessed many Africans whose psychotic breakdown seem to have been precipitated by this agonizing internal struggle.

Professor Lambo of Nigeria, was a former Deputy Secretary of World Health Organization (WHO), and the only Black African psychiatrist at the 1958 and 1959 Tananarive pan-African conferences on mental disorders in Africa. He maintains that cultural conflict disorders are rampant in Africa. This is the result of mental maladjustment of many Africans who are rejecting indigenous values, and do not feel at home in the Western one. " This conflict creates 'malignant anxiety,' an inner insecurity of an alienated person without cultural identity" (Lambo 1962). He attributes this condition to the high incidence of mental disorders, delinquency, gang behavior and other psychopath reactions, particularly in African cities like Dakar (Senegal), Johannesburg (South Africa), etc.

The following case examples attempt to enflesh the symptoms of transient psychosis and brain fag; two of the identified cultural conflict pathology.

Transient Psychosis. *Case Example.* In the darkness and calm of midnight, Choye was found standing alone in one of the markets in the West side of Nairobi, Kenya's capital city. She was standing at the bus station when two security men found her. While the men were trying in vain to communicate with her, she was busy jumping into an imaginary bus which she

claimed had come to take her back to the village. Suspecting that she could be having a psychotic breakdown, they took her to the nearest psychiatric unit for observation.

The etiology of transient psychosis is known to be anxiety states created by rapid social changes. Another type of transient psychosis with more psychosomatic symptoms has been recorded among some "educated" Africans who return to Africa from Europe or the United States. Some Liberian returnees complained of insomnia, crying spells, chronic fatigue, palpitations, irritability, headaches, lack of concentration, etc. (Wintrob 1967). A study done in Uganda showed that some of the students at Uganda's Makerere University developed transient psychosis because that was the first time they moved from indigenous to Westernized settings (Bell, 1991).

Brain Fag. *Case Example*. Ada was my classmate in my senior year of High School. Her parents who were living in the village, had great ambitions for her, with regard to Western education. But Ada found school work difficult. Nonetheless, she resolved to do all in her power to graduate in High School with good grades.

As final exams approached, Ada stayed up for five consecutive nights, sneaking out after lights-out to study. On the third day of the exam, we were all seated in the exam hall when Ada started groaning, complaining of burning

sensations in her neck and head. Next, she started screaming aloud, "James Brow...nnnn! Do you know James Brow...nnnn?" Her parents were immediately sent for, who took her to an indigenous healer.

Brain Fag was first identified by Raymond Prince (Nigeria), and this disorder largely occurs among students at either secondary or university level. Prince discovered that this is another cultural conflict disorder, caused by the mismatch between the Western highly competitive and individualistic system of education, and the indigenous system which is more collaborative and collective (Prince 1960).

African Practice of Psychotherapy. Apart from a few social workers, Western psychotherapy (or counseling) is relatively new to Africa. In fact, counseling and therapy (as practiced in the West) seem 'strange' and unfamiliar to some Africans who have been exposed to it (Fernando 1991). In addition, many Africans are still unaware of these disciplines.

The main practice of psychotherapy in Africa is in the area of psychiatry which has colonial origin. In 1907, Lagos asylum was established in Nigeria, the largest British area in West Africa. With time, more centers were opened in other African countries. Even then, these facilities were largely custodial places of confinement for the 'antisocial.' Police force was used to bring clients to the insane asylum. Though

some colonialists like Carothers did admit the possibility of contextually related pathology, the primary mode of treatment was drug therapy. This remains the trend in contemporary Africa.

Colonial and today's African psychiatry have been marked by few numbers of Western-trained personnel. From his research, Bell reported that Nigeria, with a population of about 100 million, may have around fifty psychiatrists; while Sierra Leone, with a population of four million, has one psychiatrist (Bell 1991).

However, as we shall see below, indigenous healers play a significant role in Africa's mental health.

African Indigenous Psychotherapy. Even though the degree of mental breakdown was not as high as it is at present, indigenous Africa had stress producing factors which gave rise to mental illness. Pathological states manifested themselves in possession by evil spirits, psychosomatic symptoms, etc. Because persons are relational in every component of their being, sickness resulted from relational disharmony, often linked to the contrivance of witches, sorcery, malevolent forces, jealous associates, displeased ancestors, etc. Treatment includes the use of herbs, exorcisms, rituals of reconciliation for the restoration of broken relationships.

Mpolo (one of the few African Western-trained counselor) suggests that in humility, the Western-trained counselor needs

to admit that many African clients respond better to indigenous healing interventions than to the Western ones (Mpolo 1991, 28).

Several factors contribute to this. Particularly sensitive to the socio-religious dimensions of illness, indigenous healers share similar views (with clients and their families) regarding the etiology and cure of mental illness. During the stages of treatment, they often involve family members, tapping into powerful ties of affect and support between client and kin. Accessible and credible, they help the afflicted to cope with the psychosomatic effects of failure, unemployment, witchcraft, along with misunderstandings arising from social and family conflicts. Mpolo acknowledges this:

> No one needs to be a psychiatrist or a psychopathologist before being amazed by the existence of elaborate and advanced African traditional medical and mental health systems. .... institutions specialized in contributing to health and healing through guidance, diagnosis, counselling, divination, telepathy, etc. Besides, family elders...learned different methods of guidance and counseling in view of reconciliation, individual growth and health (Mpolo 1991, 12).

Some attempts have been made to integrate the wisdom of the indigenous healing system with Western psychiatry. One of the earliest attempts was in 1954, by Professor Lambo. He founded a day hospital in Western Nigeria, where clients received Western-type treatment in the hospital and indigenous care in the villages. In this way, clients lived amidst healthy persons - milieu which facilitated spontaneous

interactions similar to their home community. Sadly, this experiment withered over the years due to lack of funds and support from WHO. Similar initiative by Tigani-El-Mahi in Sudan also withered due to lack of support (Bell 1991). Fernando laments that instead of promoting such endeavor, WHO rather promotes the influx of drug therapy, sometimes in the form of so-called Western 'aid' or by seducing African governments to import these drugs (Fernando 1991).

Furthermore, the relationship between indigenous and Western psychotherapy Africa is filled with tension. Western psychotherapy is accused of stifling indigenous systems of mental care; and of using techniques and procedures that often ignore the reality of the African context. For instance, its diagnostic systems particularly the ICD-9 and the DSM-III-R are ethnocentric; and a major difficulty in revising them is complicated by culture-bound disorders and symptoms. Western psychotherapy accuses the indigenous system of widespread malpractice. Also, some African government officials (probably suffering from Fanon's 'colonial personality' syndrome) hold that indigenous healers represent a return to backward, primitive time, and so, stand in the way of real progress towards modernizing Africa! (Bell, 1991).

While the tension between both systems continue, popular confidence in indigenous psychotherapy remains high even when they cannot cure an affliction or remove the symptoms (Bell 1991). Another feature is that the afflicted and their kin

try different healers, or may use Western and indigenous psychotherapy concurrently. Recent trends also indicate that 'spiritual healing' churches are becoming prevalent as they try to reclaim the indigenous healing ministries within a christian context. I gave an example of this trend in Chapter II, in relation to the independent churches.

Our next discussion will focus on another facet of the African context - the African view of personality.

African View of Personality

This section briefly explores the basic nature of the African psyche, apart from Eurocentric oppressive contexts.

For the African, the world is a matrix of relationships between humans, the spirits, the Supreme being and nature. The whole cosmos is interdependent and interrelated. This construct has its roots in the ancient principles and practice of African thought, which is believed to date back to the Nile Valley (Jochhannon 1970, Baldwin 1992, 50).

Within the African world view, the Self comprises of a communal, spiritual, ancestral and cosmic Self at the deepest level of being (Carruthers 1986, 1990; Marima Richards 1989, 1990a; Baldwin 1992, 50).[17] At this depth of being is the essence of all things - the Soul, which is of a much greater depth than brain consciousness (Akbar 1985, Baldwin 1992, 51). The core of the Self is a cumulative pool of African Ancestral

[17]Quoted from Baldwin 1992.

knowledge, deeply rooted in psychical spiritual storehouse. Baldwin further explains:

> [The Self] is, therefore, the spiritual core, the consummate sense of We'ness, Cosmic or ultimate collective consciousness of Africans... [It contains] deeper and deeper levels of We'ness through the ultimate dimension of cosmic oneness (Baldwin 1992, 54).

The basic African personality emanates from this Self structure and manifests itself in basic Africentric traits evidenced even among diasporian Africans. One such personality trait is the deeply rooted, unconscious spiritual process through which each new generation of Africans continually move towards their essence as dynamic beings with strong religious orientation.

To sustain the coherence of this relational, communal and spiritual Self of the African needs a relatively coherent environment. In the absence of such conducive environment (as is the case with most Africans), various forms of African personality disorders result. Some examples include anti-self disorders, self-destructive disorders and alien-self disorders (Baldwin 1992, 140).

Toward Healing and Empowerment

The implications of the foregoing discussions are many: First, adequate psychotherapy for the African woman must simultaneously attend to psyche and context, both in diagnosis and treatment. Unless it is overhauled (as Hilman suggested),

the ability of the present form of Eurocentric psychotherapy to do this is questionable. Therefore, it may be incapable of effectively contributing to the transformation of the African woman (and her context). Black psychology seem to offer greater possibilities, both in the critique of Western psychotherapy and in offering alternative models for the African woman. Life-giving elements of African indigenous psychotherapy offer another possibility.

Second, attempts to borrow from some useful elements of the Eurocentric psychology must be tested and scrutinized by the experience of the African woman, especially by the measure in which it empowers her to be subject, able to speak with her own voice.

Third, the African woman needs to be empowered to feel powerful enough to exercise greater degree of personal choice; as well as having power in family relationships and in the outside world. Conscientization is a vital component of this process. In place of mere adjustment, it offers strategies for becoming aware of restrictive contexts, and working together (in solidarity) to bring about some change. Paulo Friere's[18] insights on conscientization provides an important resource.

As she works for change, the African woman need not despair in the face of enormous global injustices (like in Africa's relations with the West). Even simply shifting the

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[18]Paulo Friere will be further discussed in Chapter IV.

label of pathology to include these external factors can be healing and empowering in itself. Furthermore, Hilman's "empty protest" offers a paradigm for protesting while one seeks more life-enhancing alternatives.

Fourth, the African view of personality insists on the presence of health within the core of the African psyche, offering empowering hope and possibilities for healing.

Fifth, explicit acknowledgement of God's grace-filled presence is crucial for the African woman, whose world view (context) is basically rooted in spirituality. Also, the African view of the cosmos acknowledges that all things are created by God, are of God and interrelated. This world view can provide basis for healing.

However, one needs to be sensitive to the ways in which religious contexts oppress or empower the African woman. Just as contexts can wound, they can also heal. So, both wound and Grace co-exist in contexts.

We have seen from feminist critique that therapeutic theories and techniques can serve to maintain unjust power differentials, promoting the suffering they are seeking to ameliorate. Therefore, one needs to acknowledge the inevitable power dynamics embedded in the very process of empowerment. Furthermore, as one who has 'benefitted' from the Western system of psychotherapy, it is possible that I have imbibed some of its restrictive attitudes. I need therefore to continue self-reflection and self-evaluation.

With these implications before me, I am encouraged by the efforts of many of my African sisters, and the firm hope that 'where wounding abounds, Grace abounds even more' (cf. Romans 5:20). And so:

African sister, Black sister
you who do not know Damas or Mackay...[19]
you who are ignorant of the boundaries of your continent
and in the half-light go to draw water
like an ancient goddess wearing an edenic smile
at the only spring the neighborhood...
sister of the sapodilla[20] *tree - loving sister*
Africa will be the fruit of our accord.
(Tshakatumba - Republic of Congo).

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[19]Damas and Mackay are Negro poets who have celebrated the beauties of the Black woman.

[20]Sapodilla is a tropical evergreen tree that symbolizes constant growth.

CHAPTER V

A PASTORAL COUNSELOR'S MODELS OF HEALING AND EMPOWERMENT

I argued in Chapter III that psychotherapy (of which pastoral counseling is a branch) emphasizes the individual psyche with inadequate attention to the sociopolitical realities of the client. Instead, it relegates this realm to other disciplines. This has particularly disadvantaged women, minorities, and non-Western cultures, tending to add to their pain rather than alleviate them.

We also saw (in Chapter III) that many voices are beginning to vehemently object to this omission, (Graham 1992; Black psychologists, Hilman 1992; Worell and Remer 1992; Sue & Sue 1990; Boyd-Franklin 1989; Seymour 1971; etc.). As the dialogue continues for alternative models that will simultaneously attend to the intrapersonal, interpersonal and systemic realities in the client's life, this chapter will offer two models of healing and empowerment that will attempt to intentionally include both the psychic and the socio-centric dimensions. One is the *Self-in-Community Model*, a multisystemic approach to healing and empowerment for individual or family counselling. The other is the Collective Empowerment Model, a model of group process that attempts to integrate the therapeutic process, theological reflection and

Paulo Friere's insights. Although both models are designed for the African context in general, they are for African women in particular.

The Self-In-Community Model

For the African, self-in-community is the primary unit of humanness. This means that any description of the individual apart from his or her community deals only with part of the process, with a fragmentation of a unitary whole. Neither the individual nor the community is to be prized above the other, since both find maturity in the balanced prizing and integration of each with the other (Augsburger 1986, 108). Mpolo further explains this concept:

> Basically, the African presents ... a comforting dependency due to the interconnection existing between the individual and the community, ... freedom and spontaneity in group encounter experiences, positive affirmation of life in human interactions, ... centrality of interpersonal relationships (1991, 93).

We saw in Chapter II that this extends to relationship with God, the deities, ancestors and other human beings.

Thus, the essence of this model is the therapeutic relationship as the locus of healing, with the belief that this relationship is curative (Miller et. al 1991, Prince 1980, Robertson 1975). This model also recognizes that healing is a family and community affair (Prince, 1980) and focuses on enhancing healing and empowering relationships between clients and their kin.

My inspiration for this model comes from the works of the women at the Stone Center, Mpolo & Nwachukwu, Nancy Boyd-Franklin, Black psychologists and the African indigenous psychotherapy. Below are some of the guiding contextual realities that inform this model.

First, in the African context, there is often no clear distinction between mental and physical illness, and dis-ease is seen as having spiritual and relational causes, such as bewitchment and sorcery, anger of mistreated and offended spirits, possession by an alien spirit, or broken human relations. Thus, while seeking counseling, the African client may already be asking two important questions "who is the cause of my illness? Is it I, or someone else? And some clients may come with an already-found answer to these questions. The following case example illustrates this.

Chiluba is married with five grown up children. He states his problem as follows:

I am bewitched[1] by my wife, who has made a woman of me. At night when we sleep, she robs me of my penis and attaches it on her own body and transfers her vagina and breasts to me. I have woken her up to tell her about it, but she wouldn't even pay any attention. She refuses to agree that she is a sorceress.[2] (Adapted from Mpolo 1990, 86).

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[1]Accusations of bewitchment is a common African phenomenon. Mpolo maintains that if properly handled it becomes a symbol used by the individual to redeem hidden as well as social tensions, in order to move towards greater integration and maturation (Mpolo 1990, 91).

[2]Mpolo's assesses that possibly, it is important for this man to be affirmed, even in his feminine performances. This affirmation, made through understanding and acceptance of his humanness, is possibly the key to restoration and growth.

The counselor must try to come to terms with the client's perceptual world, while attempting to modify it. He/she must also recognize that within the client's world view is a wealth of valuable insights which can enhance the counseling process.

Second, one needs to honor the fundamentally religious world view of the African, since any counselor who focusses exclusively on the psychological component of human existence, will most likely be ineffective for most African clients. Since religion informs the very life of the African, one must be constantly aware of the rich store of religious symbolism which lies at the core of human persons, christian or non-christian. Counselor needs to identify and involve these in the healing process. In fact, African clients expect the counselor to use a religious ritual, particularly prayer, before and after each session. Munduni requests this of her counselor:

> Please, come first to my house and sprinkle some holy water so that the evil spirits will no longer trouble us. ... Pray with us to the ancestors for forgiveness and reconciliation (Adapted from Mpolo 1991, 88).

Third, for the African, personhood is basically connective and the primary basis for this connection is the human body. The self is seen as a network of connections: body, psyche and the environment. Body condition affects the psyche, just as psychic condition affects the body; "body language" reveals and expresses the intentions of the psyche. This model acknowledges bodily experiences as the fundamental realm of the experience of healing, empowerment and of God,

Thus, when appropriate, the counselor invites the client to value and nurture her body. Due to the importance of rituals in the African scene, simple rituals such as optional therapeutic massage encourages self-nurture through a culturally acceptable medium.[3] In the same vein, this model recognizes research findings that African clients often show a predominance of psychosomatic (bodily) symptoms and less of psychological symptoms.[4]

Furthermore, music, hymn singing and dance therapy are of great value in the African therapy (Ghunney 1993, 103). For example, among the Akan of Ghana, the 'adowa' music is played for grieving families to dance to. This induces therapeutic carthasis and helps these persons through the grieving process. This process is experienced as both communal and multi-generational. Hymn singing is also a very important therapeutic tool.

Fourth, the counselor needs to be aware that due to the co-existence of different systems of healing (discussed in chapter III) the sick person often combines their use. In the case of a client and/or family members who are simultaneously seeing the counselor and an indigenous healer (and/or

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[3]I reported in Chapter II how massage is used among the Massai of East Africa for healing. This is also a common practice among African indigenous healers.

[4]A comparison of the characteristics of depressives in the United Kingdom and Nigeria revealed the prevalence of psychosomatic symptoms in the case of Nigerian depressives, and high suicidal tendencies among the London depressives (Ayo Binitie, British Journal of Psychiatry, 1981).

attending spiritual healing sessions), the counselor needs to discuss this openly and tactfully while seeking ways to collaborate with these systems. Realistically, the counselor may also need to be attentive to the possibility of conflict. For example, a particular spiritual church or indigenous healer may prescribe a long fast for a client as part of the healing process while the counselor may perceive this as inflicting further damage. While trying to understand this tension as much as possible, the counselor may suggest that the family do the fasting (for the client), as a possible acceptable option

Fifth, in a predominantly oral and audio-visual culture such as exists in most African societies, the use of proverbs, sayings, stories, poems, art works and signs are very prominent. These can be used to support client's confidence in the counseling process and to bring his/her situation to a new level of consciousness. The ability to use proverbs in the counseling process is deemed as a mark of authenticity and maturity (Lartey 1991, 38). Ghunney reports from Mpolo and Kalu that,

> doing pastoral counseling means becoming aware of and, whenever appropriate, incorporating into the therapeutic process myths and symbols found in the assumptive and cultural world of the individual or group of individuals seeking counseling (Ghunney 1993, 91).

Sixth, as indicated in chapter III, human problems in Africa are made more complex by the struggle for mere

survival, in addition to societal pathology, compounded by Africa's relations with the West. Pastoral counseling needs to include a socio-political consciousness-raising dimension, aimed at uncovering life-denying structures and seeking a community where all may live a human life.

Metaphors for the pastoral counselor (in this model) include doctor for the worries of the heart, wounded healer, guest, reconciler of alienated relationships, a healing, affirming presence; doctor of the confusions of the head, facilitator of healing and empowering communities, healer of mind, body and spirit, etc.

The important ingredients of the Self-in-Community Model (for the counselor's approach to the client) include, Respect: valuing and recognizing the other as a person of worth and dignity, Non-Possessive Warmth: a welcoming and accepting manner which is not "sticky," Genuineness: being authentic, attempting to be congruent "inside" and "outside," Concreteness: being definite and specific, Care-frontation: at the appropriate time (and not before), to draw attention to ambiguities and unnoticed resources, Immediacy: an awareness of the "here and now" expressed or not through body language and other non-verbal cues (Adapted from Lartey 1991, 37).

The following case example illustrates the implementation of some aspects of the African realities that I have outlined.

Mondolo came to the pastoral counselor in a state of acute anxiety. She had not eaten or slept for three days. She reported having severe headaches and neck pain. Two neighbors (her close friends) had quarreled bitterly a week previously.

One of these women, upon returning home was terrified to find a little girl in her bedroom standing at the head of her bed. To her, this was clearly an evil sign of possible witchcraft. ... She went into shock and died during the night. Upon hearing this, Mondolo became extremely anxious. She was convinced that this bewitchment was caused by her close friend, and that she would be the next to die. She was afraid to return home, lest she see some omen signaling that her time had come.

The pastoral counselor listened carefully to her fears, offering interpathy, and support. She used some herbal oils to massage her ailing head and neck. After the session, they prayed together. The two agreed to go to the woman Mondolo was suspecting of witchcraft to work at reconciliation between them. This strategy ended with them accepting each other as friends again. Mondolo's anxiety dissipated and so did her aches and pain. She was also able to eat better. More importantly, communal solidarity was re-affirmed by her reconciliation with her friend. (Adapted from Augsburger 1986, 282).

Phases in the Self-in-Community Model. The three intermingling phases in this model include the *self-in-relation phase;* the *encounter phase* and the *incorporation phase.* GRACE pervades every aspect of the therapeutic process. (See Graphics on figure 1). Explanation of each of the phases is outlined below.

The Self-in-Relation phase. This phase explicitly acknowledges that even before the client approaches the counselor for help, healing is already in process through Grace, and this healing process continues during and after the therapy sessions.

Explicit acknowledgement of this disposes the pastoral counselor to receive the client's sacred story with an attitude of reverence. Very often in Africa, family members

escort the sick member to treatment centers. The counselor is also comfortable with this and in fact, he/she seeks ways to engage such persons (as allies) in the therapeutic process.

Furthermore, this phase explicitly acknowledges that Grace and wound co-exist in the individual or family context. The counselor pays attention to the social, political, economic and cultural contexts of clients and their families, to see what in the context contributes to pathology and what contributes to healing.

Another element of this phase is an explicit acknowledgement that the African sees life in its totality, and a human being as a psycho-spiritual and somatic unity. Lartey refers to this as 'relational holism,' which he explains as:

> a holism which is at once intrapersonal, interpersonal and corporate. The significant parts of a person are held together in a GESTALT in which indeed "the whole is more than the sum of the parts" (1991, 41).

Thus, the counselor welcomes the client keenly aware that this relational holism needs to indicate the principles of diagnosis, of healing and empowerment.

As noted in Chapter II, we each create ourselves internally and externally in terms of our relationships. This phase explicitly acknowledges that these relationships are webbed within us and outside us, in our relationships with family, friends and community. Even counselor and client become elements of that web in and for each other.

The Encounter Phase. This is the phase where the counselor and client encounter each other. The overriding theme at this phase is the client's STORY, as it expands, unfolds, takes turns and twists. The client welcomes the guest (the counselor) not only into his/her individual story but also into that of the family or group, including the network of relationships in the client's life. It is also possible that the client's primary concern is dissatisfaction with these relationships.

There are three interwoven processes in which the counselor attempts to identify in the client's story, key issues, blind spots, punitive ideation, religious beliefs, self-debasement, empowering resources, etc. For the sake of clarity, these processes are separately explained as follows:

The process of Empathy. The concept of empathy was already introduced in Chapter II as thoughtful or reflective, yet also an immediate compassionate caring, through which one enters into another's thinking and feeling world in an effort to understand the other's perceptions, thoughts and feelings, muscular tensions, even temporary feeling states as they come and go. Thus, one seeks to share in the other's joy or pain while recognizing that it is uniquely experienced by them.

This process puts the client's subjective experience at the center, and the counselor attends to his/her subjective experience only in so far as it may be helpful to the client.

The counselor offers her/himself to be used for the healing. We saw in Chapter II that the Stone Center women insist that in order for empathy to be effective, there must be a balance of the affective and cognitive, the subjective and objective. As a way of being, empathy helps the counselor to get in contact with the world of the client. As a form of human communication, it involves the counselor in both listening, understanding and communicating his/her understanding to the client. In 'advanced empathy,' the counselor goes beyond to communicate what the client only half sees or just hints at. Therapeutically, empathy involves helping the client understand his/her inner world better, in a context of nonjudgemental listening and understanding.

Whenever necessary, the counselor also engages in the process of interpathy.[5] This is an intentional cognitive and affective experiencing of another's thoughts and feelings, even when they come from a frame of reference different to that of the counselor. In interpathic caring, one enters into another's world of assumptions, beliefs and values and temporarily takes them as one's own. Bracketing one's beliefs, one believes what the other believes, sees as the other sees, values what the other values, and feels the consequent feelings as the other feels them.

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[5]This is a word coined by Augsburger (1986) to indicate a process that goes beyond empathy.

The Process of Self-empathy. The concept of self-empathy (also discussed in chapter II) implies empathy for oneself. The therapist plays an important role in enhancing this capacity in the client. First, his/her attitude to the story being shared allows for a relaxation of some of the engrained patterns of self-rejection and self-judgement on the part of the client. In self-empathy, the client, begins to accept the unacceptable part of the self, responding to it with care and compassion. Disowned aspects of self are reclaimed and reconnected to the self. The counselor models an empathic way of being with painful memories and feelings. Empathy for both self and other increases through the therapeutic exploration, involving also the growth of compassion for self and other.

The Relational Empowerment Process. As we saw in Chapter II, this concept has its basis in the early mother-daughter relationship. In this model, relational empowerment would be a holistic process which involves the recognition of the various levels of oppression of women, including its embeddedness in the culture, its maintenance in family relationships, and its internalization within individual women; as well as a recognition of the need for transformation at individual, family and larger systems levels.

The counselor provides a conducive context within which empowering process can occur by communicating empowering and trusting attitudes toward the client. The Counselor affirms

the client's reality while gently challenging her internalized oppression within an oppressive environment. The counselor may also need to reframe the client's symptoms, for instance, reframing depression as a healthy normal adaptive reaction to oppressive circumstances. Whenever necessary, (and if client appears ready), the counselor includes a consciousness-raising dimension, highlighting the systemic pathologies that may be contributing to her difficulties. In all this, the counselor carefully moves at the client's pace, acknowledging her fears, pointing to her hopes and her resources.

Both counselor and client trust in their relationship to provide the empowerment needed by the client to empower and be empowered. Such interaction can then transfer into action in other realms, as the client becomes increasingly response/able and empowered to act. Also, the healing and empowerment that happen are gradual and continue beyond the sessions.

The Incorporation Phase. This is the action phase. It seems valuable for the African client to perform some concrete action in-between meetings,[6] to be evaluated at the next meeting (if the individual or family feels the need to return for another meeting with the counselor). The client uses the experience of the relational empowerment phase to restore specific relationship(s) that could be in jeopardy. The

[6]Research has shown that action-oriented therapy seems very effective in the African context (Mpolo 1991, Sue & Sue 1990, Baldwin 1993, etc.)

counselor and client can mutually and creatively find ways to involve the family/community in this because for the African, lasting healing needs to be a family and community affair. It is the family or community which must receive, support, and integrate the client back into healthful relationships. Outside therapy, the counselor may also need to maintain some contact with some of the client's network of relationships.

Thus, the incorporation phase may or may not be brief depending on the needs of the individual or family.

The following case example illustrates what the incorporation phase entailed for the client described below.

Mafwana, a 28-year-old woman, was referred to Mpolo by a European counselor who could not understand her problem. One month after her separation from her husband, she became anxious, felt burning sensation in her eyes and head. She had repetitive dreams in which her dead grandfather told her to go to the village and kill a goat for her uncle (who disapproved of her marriage, and died five weeks afterwards). After a few sessions with Mpolo, she chose to return to the village (for reconciliation) by doing what her grandfather had suggested. This resulted in her complete cure. She returned to Kinshasa (Zaire) a new person. Despite her seeming Westernization through christianity and Western education, this reconciliation symbolized her dynamic African world vision and her solidarity with indigenous values on both conscious and unconscious levels (Augsburger 1986, 289; Mpolo 1990, 81).

Conclusion.

This model invites counselors to assist their African clients in expanding their sense self within their relational contexts. I want to caution that insisting on 'eye contact' could constitute an obstacle especially if lack of it is interpreted negatively (as is the case in many Western cultures). The counselor may need to check this out with each

client because in most African societies, it is rude to establish eye contact when addressing an older person! Furthermore, most African clients are likely to seek short-term counseling, which is action oriented and embedded in meaningful relationship. Furthermore, counselor may need to be willing to have sessions in the clients home-setting with family members present. Finally, this is a model-in-progress, open to some revision, as it is being implemented.

PHASE I

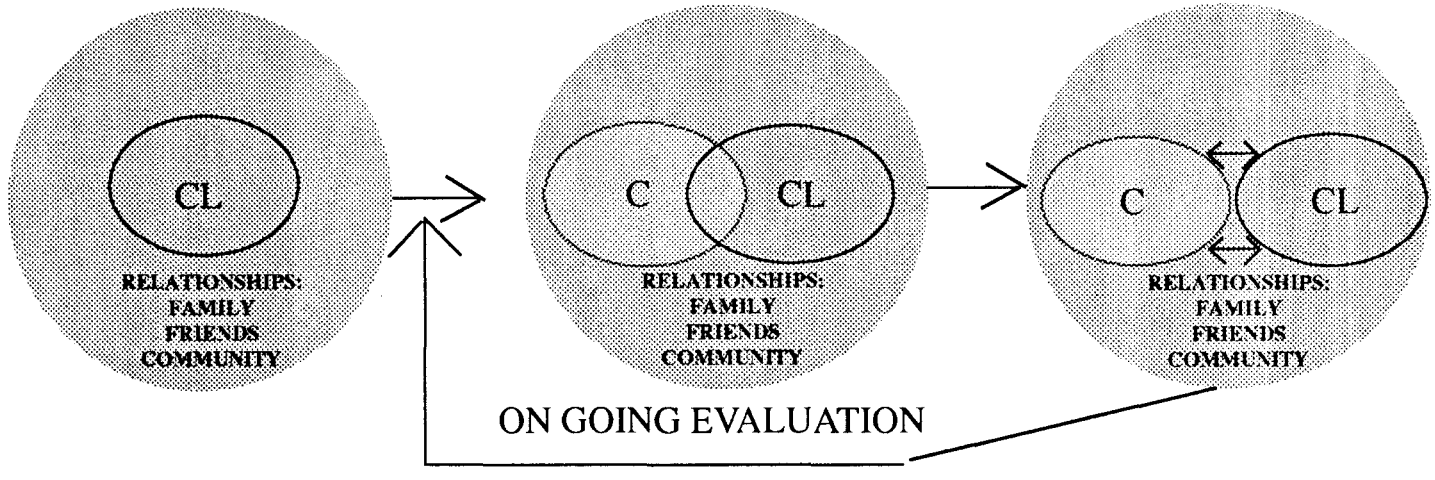
SELF-IN-RELATION PHASE

PHASE II

ENCOUNTER PHASE

PHASE III

INCORPORATION PHASE



STORY

*CL'S action to seek healing as a call of Grace

STORY

* Empathy
* Self - Empathy
* Relational Empowerment
* Rituals

STORY

* Concrete Action of CL
* C's support and contact with CL's family, etc.
* Rituals

GRACE ---------- WOUND

Fig. 1. THE SELF-IN-COMMUNITY MODEL

C= COUNSELOR
CL= CLIENT

Model of Collective Healing and Empowerment

In Chapter 1, I outlined some of the roots of oppression of the African woman. Issues that surfaced in this discussion included christianity and modernity's erosion of women's power, polygamy, women's lack of direct access to the scriptures, the churches' part in upholding structures that oppress women, female circumcision, etc. The framework that I am about to design is a group process, aimed at facilitating the healing of the psychic wounds resulting from women's oppression, and also empower women to discover and speak their own truths regarding these issues.

This particular design looks at a specific female issue, namely, polygamy in Nigeria. However, it can be used effectively for any "Burning Issue"[7] in women's lives. This model is also designed so that it can be adapted to other African countries. It contains elements of theological reflection, insights from Paulo Friere, and the therapeutic process.

Topic: Polygamy in Nigeria - Women's perspective

I have already discussed the issue of polygamy in Chapter I. I noted that this is a topic over which there is heated debate in Africa. With current trends towards inculturation, African men and their Western sympathizers argue for a

[7]"Burning Issue" is Paulo Friere's term, which refers to any issue that the oppressed sees as priority for their action /reflection process.

dialogue that seeks to understand polygamy from men's perspective (Bujo 1992, Hilman 1975, Shorter 1988). But they seem to ignore women's experience, seemingly unaware that (in today's Africa) women are often the objects of polygamy and its victims.

The purpose of this design is therefore, to turn attention to the experience of Nigerian women regarding polygamy. I am convinced that any meaningful dialogue on polygamy, must not ignore the pivotal importance of women's perspective. I hope that by inviting these women into a process where they feel listened to and taken seriously, new insights and/or challenges may emerge for them and for the church in Nigeria. Who knows where the Spirit will call us to move, for the wind of the Spirit blows where it wills?

Theoretical background

My theoretical framework include the empowerment process Paulo Friere's insights, theological reflection and the therapeutic process.

The Empowerment process. By this I mean mutual empowerment ("power with" or "power together") whereby individuals and group feel enlarged, able to see more clearly, and energized to move into some concrete action, no matter how small. Especially in the African context where individual identity is intimately linked to group membership, if an

empowered individual or group is able to empower another, this can result in making positive impact on the larger group. One stop toward such empowerment is the fostering of critical consciousness.

Paulo Friere on Critical Consciousness. In his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1993, 1970), Friere maintains that all humans are called to full humanity and fullness of life. Sadly, some humans have become oppressors through banking education[8], exploitation, cultural invasion, domination, alienation, paternalism, false generosity and domesticating charity. These mechanisms perpetuate the dehumanization of the oppressed. For the African woman, this oppression permeates every sphere of her life, politics, religion, psychotherapy, economics, culture, and on all levels, local, national and international.

With Frantz Fanon in Chapter I, Paulo maintains that this results in the internalization of the oppressor, so that the oppressor is "housed" within the oppressed; oppressed anesthetizing their consciousness in order to keep sane, a culture of silence, a false view of God that interprets their oppressive state as God's will for them, etc.

In the case of women in polygamous marriages then, the ideology of alienation divides them, so that rather than unite

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[8]Banking education sees students as empty vessels to be filled; teacher as all knownageable. Friere insists that this is characteristic of oppressive ideology.

in solidarity, the various wives compete and fight against each other for their husband's love. Another ideology is that it is better to be in a polygamous marriage and suffer the consequences, than to remain unmarried!

Friere maintains that through critical awareness and transformative action, liberation is possible for the oppressed, who must be careful not to use the same oppressive strategies as their oppressors. He provides a consciousness-raising framework such that acting together in solidarity and through a regular cycle of reflection and action, the oppressed become subjects capable of effectively transforming their lives and their contexts. The group process below weaves in Friere's insights.

Theological Reflection: A tool for healing and empowerment. In terms of this design, theological reflection seeks to give African women a voice, by validating their experience, and empowering them to engage in the process of theologizing.[9] Mpolo further explains:

> For the African woman, her situational anxieties, hopes, disappointments, dreams, persecution delusions, witchcraft, etc. are all materials for theological reflection; as well as her understanding of sin, spirit possession, ancestral power, and reconciliation rituals (1991, 26).

Therefore, through this process, African women engage in

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[9]This involves a dialectical process of action/reflection which generates ever new questions (Grant 1989, 13).

constructing their own theologies, through genuine conversation with God's word to them in their Experience, religious Tradition, and Culture.

Combined with Paulo Friere's principle of critical reflection, theological reflection becomes a powerful tool of empowerment for today's African women many of whom have been so domesticated that they blindly accept whatever the church teaches through the male-dominated clergy, even when these teachings oppress or marginalize them.

There are methods of theological reflection and the basic framework includes entering into some aspect of the group's experience with heightened awareness, and simply attending to it non-judgementally. The group encounters feelings, which includes physical body sensations. As they gently pay attention to these feelings, images arise effortlessly. Considering and questioning the images may spark insight. Insight, if they are willing and ready, may lead to empowering action. This may move the group to a new stage of further reflection on the action and the process continues. The three basic elements needed for such action are prayer, planning and solidarity.

Throughout the theological reflection process, the animators exhibit genuine care, compassion, and gentle challenge. They are like midwives assisting in the birthing of insight and action.

The Therapeutic Process. This entails creating an atmosphere where group members feel sufficiently safe, supported, listened to, and free to participate actively. The animators attempt to provide this by maintaining a spirit of caring in which all members are able to contribute their best. At the beginning of each session, time is given to anybody who has some pressing concern to share with the group. Animators attempt to deal constructively with conflict so that all feel that they are heard. They also follow a process of decision-making which ensures that everybody 'owns' the decision and feels committed to carry it out; using regular participatory evaluation; and emphasizing confidentiality throughout the process.

Methodology

Having outlined the theoretical background, I will illustrate the method using the experience of polygamy.

Group participants. Potential participants will be a group of adult women (illiterate and semi-illiterate), who have had some direct or indirect experience of polygamous marriage. In order to develop a real community spirit during the length of the group life, the group size will be limited to 8-10. An important criterion for membership would include that participants commit themselves to eight weekly sessions, of one and a half hour duration. The participants will

require some basic listening skills, which will be taught at the part of the process. If possible, the group process will be facilitated by two counselors (animators). The animators' tasks are highlighted in each step of the process.

The Goals for the group process include.

* To universalize the women's experience of polygamy, to support and validate this experience
* To provide a safe environment for reflective carthasis
* To increase female solidarity and critical consciousness
* That the women will experience some healing and come to re-claim their self-consciousness as women of dignity and as Africans; and also reclaim their faith such that it becomes more life-giving
* That the women will be empowered to undertake some altruistic action within and beyond the group

The framework of the group process is as follows.

1. Introductory exercise
2. Listening exercises
3. Short input on empathic listening
4. Input - Paulo Friere
5. Input - Theological reflection
6. Evaluation of the process so far
7. Theological/critical reflection process

8. Overall evaluation and Conclusion

Detailed description of each of the above steps is described below. Times for break, lunch, etc. are not included in this description.

Session One. The aim is to create a safe atmosphere for the women to reflect on and share their experience, planned as follows.

The process begins with singing as people gather. Animators welcome participants with a brief explanation of the process. Then, an introductory exercise in which participants and animators are asked to say their names and share with the group how they got their first and middle names. Animators will summarize the pertinent themes in these names. They will then elicit from the participants, their hopes and expectations, which will be expressed in sample symbols on a news print. Together, they and the participants will try to come up with acceptable group norms. Time for questions / comments.

Animators will ask for two volunteers for the listening exercises (for session two) and brief them on what to do. Hymn singing serves as the closing ritual.

Session Two. Introduction: One of the animators will lead the group through body relaxation exercise (with African music in the background). Emphasize deep breathing, becoming

aware of a tense body part. Share with a partner and do what you need to do to relax it. Participants will share in two groups what the experience was like for them. Animators in each group will observe individual's ability to listen.

Then, the presentation of listening exercises The aim is to improve the quality of emphatic listening within the group, as this skill will be necessary throughout the process (Adapted from Hope and Timmel 1992).

Scene 1. Two people meet and one of them gets so involved in her story that she pays no attention to the other person, who tries to come in. This person gets frustrated and becomes silent.

Scene 2. Two people meet and both start telling the other what they are concerned about. They each have a different topic, and neither is listening to the other.

Scene 3. Two people meet, greet each other and start a real dialogue. Each one asks questions about the other's interests, listens, and shares her own story.

In each case, the volunteers decide on a topic beforehand. Each of the scenes takes one to two minutes. The group is divided into two to answer the following questions:

a. What did you see happening in scene 1?

   What did you see happening in scene 2?

   What did you see happening in scene 3?

b. How do the things you saw happen in real life?

c. What can we do to make communication as good as

possible in this group?

The answer to question (c) is put on the news print for those who can read. Also, the animators summarize the points as 'guidelines for empathic listening.' (Again, sample symbols may be used here).

This is followed by a short Input on listening, with the following key points. First, the need to listen with interest to what each participant shares with the group. Second, the need to give responses that encourage the speaker to share more, clarify what she is trying to say, to reflect deeper on what she is sharing or engage in some decision about what she shares. Third, presenter demonstrates non-verbal cues that indicate whether or not one is listening with interest. Finally, participants are invited to share their difficulties with listening. Then, time is given for questions or comments. Body relaxation serves as the closing ritual.

Session Three. Introduction: Lead participants through a progressive relaxation of the body, with African music in the background. This will be followed by a summary of Paulo Friere's insights (outlined earlier), with visual aid and examples from daily life.

Exercise. There will be an exhibition of a set of pictures depicting different aspects of polygamy; the economic political, cultural, and religious aspects. These pictures are used as what Paulo calls a 'code,' which means using them

to evoke questions and discussion for the participants. Each participant will choose a picture that speaks most to her.

In two small groups, participants will share what they see in the picture they have chosen, and how it relates to the reality of their daily lives. The small groups will report the fruit of their discussion in a plenary session. Animators to ensure that all are heard and the key elements highlighted in sample symbols. Time for questions, comments or further implications. Cultural therapeutic dance serves as the closing ritual.

Session Four. Introduction: Teach participants simple shoulder massage to be done in pairs, with African music in the background. Then, a review of the key points on the news print from session three. Questions and/or comments are followed by a short input on theological reflection (discussed earlier), with examples from daily life. Then time is given for further questions, comments or implications. Finally, there is overall summary and group evaluation of the process so far. Spontaneous prayers with hymn singing serves as the closing ritual.

Session Five: Reflection on the experience source. Introduction: "Daughters of Africa," a poem to be slowly recited by one of the participants or animator. Steps in the process include, a short role play, time for personal

reflection and questions to be discussed in small groups.

The role play is the story of a man named Chike (meaning: God is powerful). Chike is married to three women named Ebele Chukwu (God's mercy); Ijeoma (good tidings); and Chinwe (God's gift) respectively. Those doing the role play practice beforehand.

Chike: Sitting authoritatively and arrogantly calls Ebele to bring him food.
Ebele: meekly answers, hurriedly (looking haggard) brings the food, serves it on the table, and stands aside to see if Chike approves of her dish.
Chike: Tastes the food, frowns and throws it at her cursing
Ebele: with tears rolling down her cheeks, picks the plate and the food, now scattered on the floor
Chike: still cursing, tells Ebele what a lousy, lazy woman she is; how his other two wives are better than her. (While this is going on, Chinwe and Ijeoma are seen peeping, happy at their husband's praise of them, and fearful of being summoned by him to serve their dishes).
Chike: arrogantly calls Chinwe to bring her dish.
Chinwe: quickly and obediently brings her dish, serves it to Chike and stands aside. (But Chike, on tasting the food, treats her the same way as Ebele). The role play ends with Ijeoma frantically tasting her dish to ensure that it really tastes good, so that when summoned by Chike, she could escape the treatment given to Ebele and Chinwe.

Small group discussion.

a) What memories does the role play evoke in you?

b) Who was there? How did you feel? How did you respond?

c) How might God be present to you in that situation?

d) Any insights?

The animators' modelling of empathic listening, compassion and deep respect for each person's sacred story is crucial here. When each person has been sufficiently heard, then move to question (d)

d) Pick common feelings / images / themes / that emerged for

you in your sharing

e) Make up a song or chorus around what emerged for you

Conclusion. With the whole group gathered, each group will share their common theme(s), image(s), or feeling(s). The group will also lead us in their song or chorus. This will serve as a closing ritual for the session.

Session Six. Reflection on culture source (African indigenous culture). The aim is first to reflect on the practice of polygamy in the indigenous culture. Second, in dialogue to see how this resonates, conflicts or challenges the insights from section five - the experience source.

There is review of the previous session using the chorus and/or songs that emerged from the group, followed by the introduction of the goals for this session. Then, there will be a short input on "Polygamy and women in pre-colonial Africa". (If possible, this is done with a slide show). The key message of the input is that polygamy in pre-colonial Nigeria was much more respectful of women, than its present practice since colonialism and christianity. There is time for questions and/or comments.

Small Group reflection:

a) In two small, one group will reflect on an indigenous story or fairy tale, myths and proverbs that speak of polygamy and women; the other group on indigenous dances and songs that address the same issue

b) Each group will pick out central themes

c) With the whole group gathered, each group will share their responses to (a) and (b)

d) The animators collate and summarize what has emerged.

e) In the light of all this, what (if any) new insights emerge? - a brainstorming exercise for the whole group

Conclusion. In pairs, individuals share with each other where they are at this point of the process: feelings, desires, concerns, questions, etc. Then, in turn, each partner (while laying hands) blesses her partner, asking God for whatever is her deepest desire, need or concern at this point of the reflection. This will serve as the closing ritual for the session.

Session Seven. Reflection on christian tradition source. The aim is to empower the women to test their experience against the background of a woman in scripture. Noticing the similarities and differences of this woman's experience and their own, to see if this woman has something to offer them in their situation.

Steps in this process include a review of the previous session to be done as follows: at random, volunteers will share their learning from the previous session, and at intervals of this sharing, chorus and the song from session five will be song. Then, there will be introduction of goals of the session, with time given for questions and comments;

followed by the story of the woman bent double (Lk 13: 10-17).

A particular cultural story-telling skill will be employed here. With the whole group gathered, four women (with whom one of the animators have rehearsed the story), will tell different parts of the story. At significant places in the story, we will all sing the chorus or song from session five. At the end of the story, there will be pause for individual reflection.

Questions for small group reflection:

a) Re-tell the story in your own words

b) How does it console you? How does it challenge you?

c) What empowering themes does the story hold for you?

d) Each person to demonstrate in body gesture (no words) her response or reaction to the story

e) Each group will choose a common body gesture that most captures their response to the story

Large group discussion:

Each group will share their body gesture. Those not in the group will try to verbalize what the gesture just presented means to them; then, the presenting group will be invited to share their own interpretation of the gesture. The animators will collate and summarize the common themes, and facilitate the group's discussion around those themes, especially the healing and empowering themes.

Conclusion. With the whole group in a circle, each group will repeat their body gestures; to which the group may

respond with a song. Holding hands, we will sing the Magnificat together, as our closing ritual for the session.

Session Eight. Culmination and Termination. The aim is to pull together all of the group process, facilitating the women in claiming what these sessions have meant to them; as well decide as a group where they stand now with regards to treatment of women in polygamous marriages.

I cannot foresee the outcome of the reflection, but if we decide on any action (no matter how small) a detailed planning will follow, even if it means beginning with making a decisive statement on the issue. It will also include who does what, when, how, where and when to evaluate.

Outline for session eight. In two groups of four, individuals share their experience of the group process, while the other members respectfully listen and give feedback. Each small group will choose a creative way that they want to share their group experience of the process, expressing central themes, insights and challenges, to be shared in the large group. Animators will collate and summarize what was shared.
Group discussion questions:

a) What difference has the experience of these days made in my life?

b) How can we support each other in living out this difference?

c) As a group, what do we want to do (or not do) as a result

of our experience of these days?

Group members and animators will commit themselves to any action that the group decides to take, no matter how small, with time for evaluation.

We will then conclude with a para-liturgy, described as follows: The story of the woman bent over is told again as in session seven. (Pause for silent reflection). We then sing songs and chorus from session five. All are invited to share words, phrases, or body gestures that each person takes with them as we end the reflection. We shall then break kola[10] and share with each other, as a sign of our commitment to support one another in what emerged for us during the group process; and then, end with mutual blessing (in pairs) as in session six. Group evaluation of the whole process follows, and more songs if the group feels moved to do so.

Possible Limitations of this design. I am aware that the absence of men's experience could be a limitation. However, I am also aware that there presence may hinder the women in sharing freely. Thus, depending on how this design works with the women, I may organize a separate one for the men, at another time. I am also aware that even with the details presented here, there may be the need for flexibility in the actual doing of the group process.

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[10]Kola is a symbolic food of solidarity in the Nigerian culture, with special rituals for breaking it.

Finally, I come to this group process with some bias, the main one being that I consider today's practice of polygamy in Nigeria, as degrading women's dignity, whereas for some Nigerian women and men, it is much worse to remain single and unmarried!

Conclusion

The two models that I have presented here are part of an on-going search for relevant culture-specific models of pastoral counseling for the African context, for the healing and empowerment of the Africans, especially women. Though these models are yet in-progress and the task ahead seems enormous, I am encouraged by the empowering action of many others, convinced that through all of us, our Loving God can do infinitely more than we dare ask or even dream (cf. Ephesians 3:20). Yes! Together, we march on with hope...

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

This project is basically about the contextualization of pastoral counseling in Africa. My concluding remarks will highlight some after thoughts, suggestions for further research, the implications of this study for myself, missionaries working in Africa, and for the Masters in Pastoral Counseling (MAPC) program. Finally, I will mention possible limitations of my work.

This study has explored the roots of oppression of African women, from pre-colonial times to its enormous escalation since the time of colonialism and missionary activity. Due to its embeddedness and enormity within the larger global context (as well as within the psyche of the African woman), I have suggested generative models that will simultaneously attend to the psychic and socio-centric dimensions in the healing and empowerment of African women. Possibly, these models raise more questions than they provide answers. This is perhaps as it should be, given the developmental stage of culture-specific counseling for non-Western cultures like Africa. It is my hope that further research will continue in this direction.

To develop relevant and effective culture-specific

approaches for Africa, further research needs to be done on the specific helping skills of African indigenous healers and use them as a frame of reference rather than the Western ones.[1] There is also the need for more innovative models of counseling that will intentionally include the sociopolitical forces that contribute to individual pathology in Africa. Black psychologists offer signs of hope in this direction. Furthermore, research needs to aim at reclaiming elements of psychic health in pre-colonial African women.

Significantly, this study has taken me to places I did not expect to go. It has helped me to see how Western propaganda, media, Eurocentric history, theology and other disciplines, including psychology, contribute to the dehumanization of the African in general, and the African woman in particular. I am also more aware of how these disciplines hold possibilities for healing and empowerment.

One of the most important things this project did for me was to allow me to engage in my own journey of healing and empowerment. I have also had the opportunity to uncover the treasures within the African woman, and to reclaim them for myself and for my people.

As I return specifically to Nigeria (in West Africa), this study has many implications for me. To name a few; I am

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[1]Ivey and Nwachukwu's pioneering research in this area (done in the Nigerian context) is now in the press, yet to be published (Sue & Sue 1990, 74).

more awakened to the enormous task awaiting any pastoral counselor who takes the African context seriously. I feel like I am only beginning to scratch the surface. I therefore, commit myself to take time to listen and in my enthusiasm to not impose my insights, for to empower is to be deeply respectful of the other's process. In fact, I need to first observe and learn, so that my ministry emerges out of an on-going integration of the fruits of this process. Second, the generative approach that I have taken in this thesis, calls for concern with power imbalances and inequality in the distribution of resources in the different spheres, including psychological, familial, religious, social, economic, political, etc.

I am also encouraged by the signs of hope already present in Africa: the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, the breath-taking landscapes of Africa, the glorious sky, warmth and dignity of its people, values of family, promotion of life, the mutual care that continue to resist the corrosion of modernity, and so on. I need to celebrate these along side the struggles.

For the many missionaries returning to Africa, this study also has some implications. In the book, Pastoral Counseling in a Global Church, two graduates of Loyola MAPC program speak for themselves:

> After completing the Masters Program in Pastoral Counseling at Loyola College in Maryland, where I learned many theories in counseling, I returned to Ghana with the hope of practicing the theories I

> had learned. I realized however, that though the theories were good ones, most of them were not practicable in Ghana (Ghunney 1993, 82).
>
> The counselor who arrives in Kenya [Africa] armed only with Western counseling skills, Western theology, and so on, goes forth inadequately prepared (Rieschick 1993, 37).

In fact, it has been stated that training programs for counselors in the United States operate as if prospective professionals will be catering for just White clients, and in the case of a minority client, just a few modifications of the white models will suffice (Ivey & Ivey 1989, Corey & Corey 1989, Sue & Sue 1990, etc.). A survey of counselor-education programs in the U.S.A. revealed that fewer than 1% of the respondents reported any instructional requirements for the study of non-white cultures (Rieschick 1993, 35).

Nonetheless, at a conference of psychologists and counselors, a task group recommended that the "provision of professional services to persons of culturally diverse backgrounds by those not competent in understanding such groups be ... considered unethical" (Sue & Sue 1990). Therefore, as a missionary, who belongs to a missionary community, I suggest to my fellow missionaries that we carefully scrutinize our Eurocentric theories before using them in the African context. Failing to do this could result in another subtle form of Westernization, domestication and further oppression of Africans. Accounts show that due to its modulative orientation, "wholesale" exportation of Western psychology to Africa has subtly served as a political strategy

to maintain African's dependence on the West, and helped support the growth of Westernized African elite (Moghaddam 1990, 27).

The implications of my study for the MAPC program is in the area of multicultural sensitivity. First, I want to state that I have benefitted greatly from what this program has offered me, for which I am very grateful. I also admit that there is some recognition from the faculty of the need for multicultural sensitivity in counseling.

However, the 1987 National Psychology Conference has recommended that given the nature of American society and the harm psychology has done to minorities in the United States, multicultural sensitivity needs to permeate every facet of the training program (Sue & Sue 1990). As one from another culture who has also engaged in counseling minorities in the United States, my experience is that there is still lack of permeation of multicultural sensitivity in the MAPC courses.

Moreover, the MAPC faculty still lacks non-white faculty members. Ponterotto & Casas indicate that serious attention to multicultural issues tend to happen where there is a minority faculty member who invests a lot of energy to make this happen (Sue & Sue 1990, 14). Admittedly, the move to offer a course in multicultural counseling is a very positive one. However, this will make a significant difference if the one teaching it is intentionally and culturally-sensitive, possibly, a competent minority faculty member.

In addition, common consensus assert that training in multicultural sensitivity does not merely entail an acquisition of cultural knowledge but very importantly, the trainees self-exploration and self-knowledge regarding the pervasiveness of racism within the American culture. This involves a gradual process of racial identity development that both the White dominant group and Minorities undergo (Sue & Sue 1990, Jones 1992, Worell & Remer 1992, etc.).

These proponents insist on naming the centrality of the issue of race in the American society, with the hope that with increased honesty in addressing this issue, the present oppression will one day give way to God's dream of a new creation where people of all races, nations, color, and language will live in right relationship (cf. Rom. 10:12).

On Tables 1 and 2 below, I have summarized the developmental stages for Whites and Minorities (the one by Sue & Sue 1990).

Table 1

White Racial Identity Development

Stage 1: Conformity	Stage 2: Dissonance	Stage 3: resistance and Immersion	Stage 4: introspective Stage	Stage 5: Integrative Awareness
*Primary mechanism is denial, color blindness *Minimal awareness of self as a racial being *Adheres to stereotypes *Consciously or unconsciously accepts white superiority	*Conflicting feelings due to the recognition and acceptance of one's racism, and one's part in upholding systems that oppress the minority *Feelings of shame, guilt, sadness, anger, depression, sense of powerlessness	*Acknowledges the pervasiveness of racism and begins to challenge his/her racism *Racial self-hatred, anger at other whites *Over-identifies with minority as their paternalistic protector	*Pendulum swings to the middle ground *Searches for some direction beyond merely reacting to racism *No longer denies one's racial identity as white	*Non racist white begins to emerge *No longer denies racism *Increased knowledge of socio-political influences as they affect race relations *Social commitment toward eradication of racism

Source: Sue, D.W. and D. Sue. Counseling the Culturally Different: Theory and Practice. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1990) 112-117.

Table 2

Minority Racial Identity Development

Stage 1: Conformity	Stage 2: Dissonance	Stage 3: Resistance and Immersion	Stage 4: Introspective	Stage 5: Integrative Awareness
*Self-depreciating *Group depreciating *Discriminatory attitude toward other minorities *Appreciating of the dominant group	*Conflict between self-appreciating and self-depreciating *Conflict between views held by the dominant group and one's minority group *Conflict between dominant group appreciating and dominant group depreciating	*Self-appreciating *Minority group-appreciating *Dominant group-depreciating *Conflict between empathy for other minority groups and culturo-centrism	*Concern for basis of self-appreciating *Concern for basis of dominant group-appreciating *Concern with basis of other minority group-appreciation	*Self-appreciating *Minority group-appreciating *Other minority group appreciating *Selective appreciation of dominant group

Source: Sue, D.W. and D. Sue. Counseling the Culturally Different: Theory and Practice. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1990) 95-112.

I admit that *conversion of heart* (which is a gift of Grace) is needed for true multicultural sensitivity to happen. However, we need to work to prepare a fertile ground for Grace by consciously increasing multicultural sensitivity in the MAPC program. Not only will we be enriched in the process, we will also be more effective counselors, better able to be of help to the culturally different who come to us for healing. For those of us who return to different countries, this same principle of sensitivity and reverence will hopefully embody our ministry of care, healing and empowerment. In the words of Sampson:

> Psychology's legitimacy will not be sustained merely by collecting more data, even on more inclusive samples... In the long run, psychology's legitimacy resides in the hands of the people. These people have become both more diverse and more restless. Their differences are showing and will not be silenced... Either psychology will listen and change, or it will lose its thrust as an important contributor to the tasks of our time (Sampson 1993, 1228).

This challenge and invitation is extended to the MAPC program, as we approach the twenty-first century.

Possible Limitations of this Work

As a culture-bearer and observer, I am aware of some reporting problems. First, from the wealth of data and my need to be selective, I may ignore what appears commonplace to me, but which nevertheless may be relevant to a non-participant of the African culture. The second is the possibility that my emotional involvement may limit my

objectivity. All the same, I do believe that my contribution (as a woman who is also African) is significant. Furthermore, throughout this work, I have assumed the risk of drawing upon a variety of sources and ordering them for my purposes, without necessarily demonstrating critical control of these sources.

Finally, this project is but one contribution to the bigger dialogue among concerned Africans regarding the African situation. In fact, I look forward to collaborating with the pluralistic network of healing and empowerment ventures in, and for the African context; allowing God to transform our reality; to replace the present injustice and oppression with right relationship; our anxious groping with the shalom of peace. Peace, not just for Africa, but for the whole human family, and the whole of creation. And so,

Black Woman of Africa
Tireless gazelle
who wanders at the close of day
through the hushed thickets of dead wood you gather
O black woman! guileless sister
your beauty touches me your beauty enchants me
like the blue wave shimmering
in your unfathomable depths
To see moored beneath the intertwined lianas
a continent moored in a trance
where the tom-toms beat out the rhythm of life
O loving friend in the giant encrusted homeland
Africa will be what we together make it.

(Tshakatumba - Republic of Congo).

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